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Fred Halyard, THE LIFE BOAT BOY; OR, The Smugglers of the Inlet.

A Story of the Lower Beach.

BY CHARLES MORRIS.

AUTHOR OF "THE GAMIN DETECTIVE," "THE BOSS BOY,"
"BILLY BAGGAGE," "PICAYUNE PETE," ETC.

CHAPTER I.

A LONG CHASE.

"THEM fellers is ridick'lously risky," growled an old waterman, who stood at the water-line, on the Beach City coast, looking seaward. "Did ye twig

'em, Joe? Why, their keel hardly cleared the shallers. And with a fresh puff of air like this! They moughtn't find it so comfort'ble if they got sand-logged."

"I didn't sight 'em," replied the man addressed as Joe. "I was lookin' south'ard. What sort o' craft was it?"

"A full-rigged barque," returned the first speaker. "Sizable, too. Mought have crossed the salt pond, by her tonnage. And not a half-mile clear o' low-water mark."

"Under full sail?"

"No. Consid'ble shortened. She best pull off while her skin's whole; that's all I've got to say."

For a while longer the two watermen stood looking seaward. Then the one named Joe exclaimed:

"Blest if there ain't yer barque again, clawin' off shore! See, yonder, Jack! She's tacked and stood seaward. Mebbe her keel's scratched bottom, and gi'n her a hint that sand's unhealthy."

"No," and Jack shook his grizzled head. "She weren't fur enough in to touch. There's a screw loose

there, Joe. I'd give summat to have an eye over that chap's bulwarks."

"Good luck go with her," replied Joe, yawning. "Let's turn in. It's past midnight, and I'm gettin' terrible sleepy."

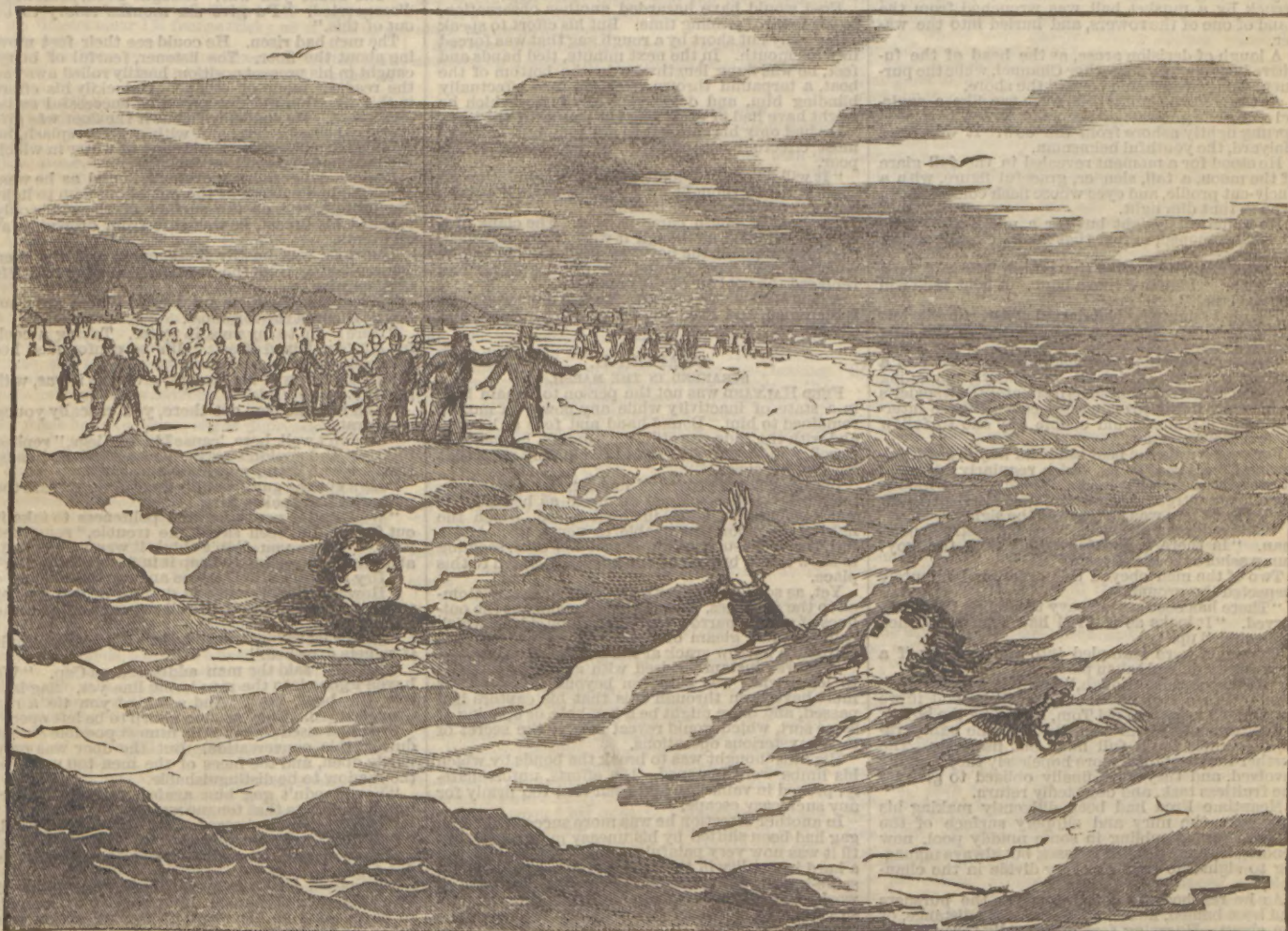
Jack made no move in response to this invitation. He had partly stooped, and stood with his eyes shaded, looking across the inlet to the low shores of Turtle Island, that lifted a half-mile away.

"It's as I guessed," he averred, slapping his knee. "It's the Fly-by-Nights, or I'm an old sinner! Look hereaway, boy. Here, to the west of the p'int! Do ye see the flash of oars under that bunch of reeds?"

"Nary an oar," declared Joe, intently looking. "Yes, yes! I twig 'em, now! But where the blazes is the coast-guarders? Got sand in their eyes, as usual, I s'pose."

They were interrupted by the swash of oars, almost at their feet, and by a hail in a loud, and somewhat imperious voice:

"Ahoy, there! Seen anything stirring on the inlet?"



IT WAS INDEED FRED HALYARD. IN A MOMENT HE HAD PLUNGED THROUGH THE SURF, AND WAS BATTLING WITH THE WAVES.

"What ye lookin' fur?" asked Jack, shortly. "A crab, or a three-decker?"

"A boat. Likely a six-oared barge."

"And d'ye s'pose yer talkin' to a land-lubber that ye can't say barge when ye mean barge?"

"It's the coast-guarders," announced Joe, in a low tone.

"S'pose I don't know?" growled Jack.

"Come, come, Jack Sprat, if it's you!" cried the voice; "there's no use standin' on your ear about nothin'. Whereaway are they?"

"Ye'll find them round the pint of Turtle Island, pullin' like sin up the inlet. They've good ten minutes' start of ye. Lay to yer oars, or ye may sell out yer caps for a song."

"Give way!" cried the voice from the boat. "With a will, boys!"

The two old watermen watched the boat, as it cut like an arrow through the rippling waters.

Hope they'll overhaul the confounded sea-thieves; but I've my doubts," remarked Jack, with a wise shake of his gray hairs. "Hain't we best turn in?"

"I could bunk on a pine plank in comfort," rejoined Joe. "I'm sinful sleepy."

While they slowly turned their steps homeward, the pursuing boat was making rapid headway up the narrowing inlet.

"Hug the shore closer, Fred," commanded the stroke oarsman. "The moon is rising over the reeds. Do you see anything?"

"Yes," answered the youthful figure at the tiller. "They've just ruffled the moonlight around the sharp turn ahead."

They were now nearly a mile within the mouth of the inlet. They rowed on for ten minutes more under the shadow of the reeds. Suddenly the bow of the boat swept out from the shore line with a broad surge, and headed across the channel.

"Hallo! What's up?" asked the former speaker.

"They've smelt us out," responded Fred. "They haven't a quarter of a mile the start, and are heading sharp for Leather Channel. Lay to your oars lively. They won't have much the best of us on an angle."

The difference between the two lines, from the island shore to the inland channel, was not so great but that hard rowing might overcome it. Both boats shot rapidly forward, the men pulling with a will.

"How goes the chase now, Fred?"

"They haven't a pine-tree's length the start. They'll beat us to the channel; but I'll bet a cow we overhaul them before they are far in. Stoop, lads! Quick! The hounds are going to fire!"

His sharp warning was instantly obeyed. A loud report rung through the silent night. An oar, struck by a musket ball, was wrenched from the hand of one of the rowers, and hurled into the water.

A laugh of derision arose, as the head of the fugitive boat shot into Leather Channel, while the pursuer swung head round toward the shore.

At the same instant a lithe form ran like a squirrel along the gunwale of the coast-guard boat, and sprang lightly ashore from the bow. It was Fred Halyard, the youthful helmsman.

He stood for a moment revealed in the full glare of the moon, a tall, slender, graceful figure, with a finely-cut profile, and eyes whose flash could be seen even in that dim light.

He remained upright but for a minute, however, and then stooped, in fear that another bullet might follow.

"I'll track them over the marsh," he said, in a low tone. "I know it like a book. A bent reed will be the signal."

The next minute he had darted away, running low like a lapwing. He soon disappeared in the long marsh grasses.

The scene on which they had now entered was a perfect network of inland waterways, spreading over the broad salt marsh as intricately as a spider's web. Only intimate acquaintance with these inter-threading streams could enable any one to follow their devious course.

For over a mile the boat made its way inward, following Fred's bent reeds, which regularly appeared at every branch in the inlets. Finally, after following a longer stretch than usual, they reached a new divide, but there was no trace of the signal reed.

"That's deuced awkward," cried the stroke oarsman. "Is there something wrong with the boy? Jump ashore there and look!"

Two of the men obeyed this order, and minutely inspected the ground.

"There has been some heavy trampling," they observed. "It looks as if Fred had been ambushed and gobbled up."

The reeds were trampled into the mud, as if a sharp struggle had taken place.

"He's gone, sure enough," was the general decision. "It's a bad business. It will be odd if we don't catch rats from old Tom, for losing the boy."

The search was continued through the exasperating channels for a full hour, but uselessly. The further they went the more hopelessly they became involved, and they were finally obliged to give up the fruitless task and dejectedly return.

Meantime Fred had been diligently making his way over the miry and slippery surface of the marsh, now stumbling in some muddy pool, now rending through tangled grasses, but always managing to sight the boat at every divide in the channels.

As he reached the point at which the pursuers had been baffled, he lost sight, for some distance, of the chase. Hurrying forward rapidly through the tall grass that impeded his way, he stumbled and fell over some obstruction in his path.

He rose quickly, but what was his surprise to find himself surrounded by four stalwart men, who seemed to him to have emerged from the ground. He had evidently fallen into the center of an ambush.

"Well, little one, don't you think you've had enough fun of this kind?" asked one of them, as he grasped Fred's arm with an iron clutch. "Tain't no joke, traveling afoot through the ma'sh. S'pose you take a boat-ride with us!"

Fred was for one moment utterly disconcerted. His eyes glanced from face to face of the hard-faceted customers around him. They were regarding him with a grim aspect that was by no means reassuring.

But the boy was noted for always having his wits about him, and they failed him but for an instant now. His quick glance had taken in the situation. Resistance or flight was hopeless. He must make the best of a bad bargain.

"Dunno but maybe it would be nicer," drawled Fred, with an assumed ease. "Ma'sh travelin' is tiresome work, that's so. Been doing my prettiest to catch up with you, and get a lift aboard your boat."

"Well, I'll be blowed!" cried one of the men, with a hoarse laugh. "If he ain't a cool young chicken, sell me out!"

"Sit up! There's no time to lose," commanded the first speaker. "They're close on our trail. Step along here, my little hound. We'll find you a kennel."

But he had for an instant loosened his grasp on Fred's arm. The alert lad made a quick, unlooked-for spring, tearing himself away, and ere they could prevent him, leaped headlong into the water.

If he could but gain the other side, and hide under the shelter of its border of marsh-grass, he might be safe until his friends came up!

But the others were too quick for him. The boat shot out from the side of the inlet, where it had lain concealed. The quick-swimming boy had scarce reached the center of the stream when he was grasped by the shoulders, and lifted, as by the strength of a giant, bodily into the boat.

"Blast his eyes! Hain't we best knock the water-rat in the head, and be done with it?" growled the rough voice of the captor.

"No, no!" came from the shore. "Tie and gag him. Bloodshed don't pay."

"Didn't want to get aboard a gentleman's yacht covered with mud," said Fred, lightly. "Thought it was only genteel to wash off first. Been brung up to act polite."

"Don't parley with him," cried the leader, from the bank. "We're losing time here. Tie him, Jack. And set the boat's head in. We must be off."

Fred would have hazarded another observation, in the hope of gaining time. But his effort to speak was rudely cut short by a rough gag that was forced into his mouth. In the next minute, tied hands and feet, he was flung lengthwise in the bottom of the boat, a tarpaulin thrown over his face effectually blinding him, and destroying any hopes which he might have had of observing the course of the boat.

He had only his ears left to aid him, but he made most effectual use of them, as will hereafter appear.

"It will be odd if I don't work a triangulation on them yet," he thought. "I haven't carried a chain in the Coast Survey for nothing."

The boat at length came to rest. The clank of a chain was heard, as though it were being fastened. The next moment the boy was lifted out and laid on what seemed hard ground. A dry, warm air had replaced the cool air of the marsh.

A confused bustle ensued. Then a door was loudly slammed, and Fred was left alone in gloom and silence.

CHAPTER II.

STRANDED IN THE MARSH.

FRED HALYARD was not the person to remain long in a state of inactivity while any power of motion remained to him. Bound hand and foot as he was, and with the rude gag still in his mouth, he was able to roll, and thus to get rid of the blinding mass that covered his eyes.

But the change proved of no essential advantage, for the darkness remained as dense as before. He was evidently in some inclosed space, which the light of the moon was unable to penetrate. And a low, lapping sound of water met his ears, seeming to show that a branch of the inlet penetrated to this place.

Yet, as soon as his eyes grew somewhat accustomed to the darkness, he was able to make out the outlines of a long, narrow room, from one side of which came a faint gleam of light. It seemed to pass through a narrow crack at the bottom of a door.

Fred was instantly seized with an anxious desire to learn what was going on beyond this door. It must have been through this that his captors had passed, and there might be a key-hole, or opening of some sort, which would reveal to him the secret of their mysterious operations.

His first thought was to break the bonds by which his limbs were fastened. His efforts, unfortunately, proved in vain. He had been tied too firmly for any such easy escape.

In another direction he was more successful. The gag had been shifted by his uneasy movements, until it was now very painful to him. But he had felt a hard inequality in the floor, possibly an obtruding spike-head. By continued efforts he managed to work himself down so as to bring his mouth opposite this, and by degrees succeeded in removing the painful obstruction, which had been wedged in between his teeth.

It proved no easy matter to accomplish this, and

Fred lay in a state of partial exhaustion while his mouth was slowly returning to its normal condition.

But, there might be no time to lose if he hoped to make a discovery. His hands were tied behind his back, yet they had some little power of motion left, and he employed this to drag himself, inch by inch, forward, approaching the door whence came the light.

It was a slow progress, but the distance, fortunately, was not great. As he drew near the door the sound of voices grew plainly distinguishable. And now loud bursts of laughter rose, and a clinking sound, as of glasses or earthen cups.

There was but one point through which the light came, the crack at the bottom of the door. Fred soon satisfied himself of this, and then applied his eyes to the narrow opening.

His disappointment was extreme when he found that it only displayed the floor of a lighted-up apartment, with a few inches in height of the opposite wall. Between him and this was discerned a medley of booted feet, and the lower part of the legs of a table and of a number of chairs. The clinking sound admonished him that a drinking bout was going on.

In fact there was but one clearly distinguishable object in sight. This was a large, tiger-like, white cat, spotted on paws and tail with black, which purred and rubbed its head against the foot of one of the men.

This person lowered his hand to stroke the animal. Fred's sharp eyes caught the physiognomy of this hand almost as distinctly as if he had seen a face. It was a short, sinewy hand, with stumpy fingers, and broad flat nails. In color it was as dark as mahogany, and spotted with reddish spots. On the little finger was a thick gold ring, with a greenish stone, possibly an emerald.

"A white cat and a sun-burnt hand," cogitated Fred. "That ain't much, but it's something. When it's nip or tuck every item counts. And there's three knots in a row on that washboard. Guess I'll know this room again."

"Once more, Cap," came a voice from the room. "Here's success to the jolly-flyers, and confusion to the customs; and may the foul fiend sink their boat and singe their whiskers. Drink deep, lads; he's a traitor that leaves a heel-tap."

The clink of cups was again heard, and then a voice which Fred recognized as that of one of the boatmen.

"We must be going now. Daylight must see us on deck again."

"And what's to be done with the brat inside there?"

"Don't puzzle your wise head about him. We'll settle with him."

"The deuce you will!" thought Fred, somewhat disconcerted. "I'd give six months' salary to be out of this."

The men had risen. He could see their feet moving about the floor. The listener, fearful of being caught in his present position, hastily rolled away as the readiest mode of escape. Unluckily his effort in this direction did not prove as successful as he had hoped. He suddenly felt as if the floor was giving way beneath him, and with a noisy splash, he tumbled headlong into the stream of water in which the boat had entered that inclosure.

It was a dangerous experiment, bound as he was. But Fred had enough of the cat about him to light on his feet, and as the surface of the water only reached his breast, he was safe from drowning, at all events.

The door was hastily flung open, and the men came rushing into the room where they had left their captive.

"What the blazes is up here? Where are you, boy?" shouted the foremost.

"Here! Up to my neck in water. Taking a cooling off," explained Fred. "It's so confounded hot above there."

A laugh followed his remark, given, as it was, with inimitable sang froid.

"And how did you get there, you rascally young water-rat?"

"Couldn't walk here, 'cause I had no legs," replied Fred. "And couldn't crawl, 'cause I had no hands. Didn't see no better way except to roll."

"He's got the gag from his mouth, Cap," said the man who had spoken first.

"Well, and if you'd had the politeness to take it out for me, I'd been saved the trouble," remarked Fred. "Hope you didn't think it was so comfortable that I was going to keep it in for the fun of it?"

"Dry up there now!" came an imperious voice.

"How's a fellow going to dry up in five feet of water?" retorted Fred. "Pull me out and give me a show."

"Better leave him where he is. It's his own fault if he gets drowned."

"No, no," said the man addressed as Cap. "We haven't gone into the murdering line yet. Sag him into the boat, boys. And some of you tie a rag over his eyes. They are too sharp to be left open."

Fred had used them to the utmost possible extent during this conversation. But the door was only partly open, and the faces of the men too much in the shadow to be distinguishable.

"You needn't gag him again," said the leader, "except he sets that tongue wagging."

"Don't you get skeered, Cap," exclaimed Fred. "I wouldn't say a word now if words were apples, and they were worth a shilling apiece. I'm just as dumb as an oyster."

The speech of the irrepressible boy was followed by a laugh from the men. But as he had wit enough to be as good as his word, no further action was taken, and they quietly fell to their oars.

How they got out of that place into the open air again Fred could not conjecture, though he heard a

suspicious creaking noise as if something besides the boat had moved.

In a minute more he knew by the fresh coolness of the air that they were outside. In complete silence the oarsmen rowed on. For a period that might have been fifteen minutes and might have been an hour, for all that the captive's gauge of time could have decided, this progress continued.

At the end of that time the boat stopped, and seemed to rub up against the bank of the water-course.

"Land him here," said the voice of Cap. "We don't care a fig for what he knows, for he is as ignorant of where he has been as that bat. But let me tell you one thing, boy. If you get into my hands in this way again you won't get out so easy. And you may thank your lucky stars that you are out of it with a whole skin this time."

"That's just what I am doing," replied Fred. "And I'm much obliged to you, Cap. You can bet I'll have some business round the next corner if I ever run across you again."

Fred was left blinded and bound on the grass, while the boat shot swiftly off. It was no very agreeable position, in the midst of those winding channels, and in that muddy, oozy marsh, from which it might have been difficult for a man with the free use of his limbs and his senses to escape.

Perhaps his captors hoped, in leaving him there bound and blindfolded, that he would be drowned without any direct effort on their part. But if they thought so they did not know Fred Halyard.

"I'm as ignorant as a bat, am I?" cogitated Fred. "Don't you build too high on that, my covey, or you might be sold. We'll see if I don't find that nest of yours, with all its eggs in it."

"But the next business on hand is to get out of here," he continued. "And I can't roll out, that's settled. I must slip out of these ropes, somehow."

But that was likely to be no child's play. They had been tied by hands well versed in the work. Fred remembered, however, that they had seemed somewhat looser when he had been in the water, which might have come from their wetting. This was an idea worth working on, and he instantly swung himself around until his feet hung in the stream that ran beside him.

The water-soaked ropes yielded slightly to his vigorous muscular efforts. Fortunately for him his feet were small, and he finally succeeded in slipping one foot through the loosened grip of the rope.

He leaped upright with a "hurrah!" of triumph, but his long-bound limbs were too much stiffened to support his weight. He fell lengthwise upon his back, his hands sinking into a shallow pool of water.

"That's clever," averred Fred. "If I can only get my fingers clear I'll feel as frisky as a colt in a pasture-field."

But in this hope he was unsuccessful. After half an hour's arduous labor they remained bound as firmly as ever.

The same ill-success attended his efforts to get rid of the bandage upon his eyes. It had been tied too firmly to be moved by any means at his disposal. He felt anxiously around with feet and hands for a stick or stone, or something firm enough to act as a lever in moving the close-binding cloth.

But that soft marsh afforded nothing firmer than weeds or grass stems, all of which lacked the firmness necessary for his purpose.

"Anyhow I've got my legs," thought Fred. "But I'd give a pint of chestnuts for my eyes. And two quarts of huckleberries for my hands. A chap never knows what his senses are good for till he loses them. But I ain't going to take boarding in these diggings five minutes longer than I can help, eyes or no eyes."

He rose to his feet, which had now recovered their strength, and felt his way as well as he could about the locality.

The whole surface was moist, but it was moderately firm, and covered with a thin coating of marsh grass, while here and there slight depressions formed shallow pools of salt water.

"But my triangulation won't be worth a cent if I can't spot this place again. The grass is pretty well tramped down, that's one mark. But, I want something surer. Guess I'll have to make a spade of my toes, and dig out a ring, or a hook, or some such hole in the mud."

It proved very easy to move the oozy surface, and Fred was not ten minutes in excavating a very fair symbol of a boat-hook. At least he fancied that it was plain enough for any boatman to recognize it.

"I'll be queer if I don't hook them in, sharp as they are," he remarked, with much satisfaction.

"If they'd put me on my honor, now, and give me my eyes and hands, I wouldn't have blowed on them for a cow. But as long as it's a game of sharps, we'll see who sells out his neighbor. There ain't no half-way business with a chap like me. You've got to trust me altogether, or else drown me and be done with it; for if I don't walk into that pretty contraband nest of yours, I'll emigrate to the country of the noddies, that's all."

Fred was walking slowly onward as he spoke, feeling his way with his feet at every step.

"I've got to make a bee-line to the south'ard, or I'm a gone rooster," he ruminated. "A fellow might roam round here in a circle for the next ten years, and come out where he started. It's like being lost on the prairie. I'd give a jack-knife if the sun was up, and I could get it on my left cheek. Anyhow, there's the wind. It was sou'east last night, and maybe it's sou'east this morning. If I can only hold it on the left side of my nose, a point or two toward my ear, I might make a straight strak. If it only ain't veered since midnight."

But it was the only guide he had, and it was neces-

sary to trust to it. He knew that any southerly course would bring him to a road that crossed the marsh, and after that it would be plain sailing. But, as to the distance necessary to go, that was quite another matter.

Fred walked slowly onward, feeling his way with a precaution unusual with him. One main difficulty was the water-courses which frequently crossed his path. Fortunately, as a rule, they were neither deep nor wide, and he walked across the most of them without being immersed deeper than his neck. In two or three cases, however, they proved too deep to be forded in this manner, and swimming became necessary. Had Fred retained the use of his arms, he would have minded this no more than if he were an otter. As it was, it troubled him little. The deep portions were not very wide, and he managed to easily pass them by a process of "treading water," in which he was a proficient.

After some two hours of this slow progress, Fred was overjoyed to perceive, even through his bandage, a greater degree of light toward the left than toward the right hand.

"Day's breaking, for sure," he cried, with a loud "hallo!" of satisfaction. "And I've got the sun on my left cheek. I'm in the right road, that's certain."

He paused, for a distant sound had come to his ear. A moment satisfied him that it was the noise of wheels, rapidly approaching.

"Hallo, there!" he yelled with delight. "Ain't you going to help a—"

His appeal came suddenly to a close. In his joy he had become careless of his footsteps, and now plunged headlong into another branch of the inlet, cutting his sentence short in the middle.

But he struggled resolutely to his feet. It was a deeper stream than any he had yet crossed. With his head above water he found it impossible to touch bottom, and was obliged to pursue his former process of treading water. By this means, however, he could advance but slowly. He was growing thoroughly exhausted by the labors of the night, and found his progress in this manner becoming more and more difficult at every foot. The stream was unusually wide, and poor Fred's strength was rapidly going. He struggled manfully, with all the energy of despair, but it seemed to him as if the further shore would never be reached.

Had he mistaken the direction? Was he going down stream? The horror of this possibility overcame the flagging resolution of the boy. He made one more strenuous effort, and then his head slowly sunk under the water—his strength quite exhausted.

It seemed to him as if he heard a cry as he sunk. But it might have been the water in his ears. His last effort had been made, and the cruel stream closed over his sinking head, leaving but a ripple to mark where he had been.

And now, a moment too late, the rattle of wheels sounded on a causeway beside this fatal stream.

CHAPTER III.

WHAT THE WRECK BROUGHT OLD TOM.

THE sun rose clear and warm on the morning succeeding to the night of the events just related. Its bright beams fell alike on the salt marsh, with its plexus of water-channels, in one of which poor Fred Halyard had sunk; and on the roofs and streets of Beach City, just awakening to the pleasures of a new day.

Folks were already on the sands, enjoying the fresh air of the early morning. Of these some were tourists, who had no fancy to waste the best hours of their sea-shore trip in sleep; others were inhabitants of the city, accustomed to early rising, or with business abroad at that hour.

Among the latter was a hale, strongly-built old man, who was seated on the gunwale of a life boat, that lay, ready for use, on the beach. His stiff-rimmed sailor's hat was on the sand at his feet, leaving his abundant white hair free to the toying of the breeze. His face was burned and browned with the suns of sixty summers, but was a strong, firm-featured countenance, full of will-power and energy. He had walked with the peculiar rolling gait of an old sailor, and now sat picking a piece of rope into oakum, as if this had become second nature to him.

The old man's eyes were fixed on the sea, sweeping the horizon with the telescopic glance of an old "look-out," and noting distinct features in the distant water-line where all would have been blank space to a landsman.

"Any sail in the offing?" came a voice at his elbow.

"Ay, ay!" answered the old salt, without turning his eyes. "There's a steamer, hull-down, off there to the east'ard; and a light spray of sail hereaway, headin' south."

"But, how can you make out a steamer when she is hull-down? Is she under sail?"

"I'd be hard enough to miss her," returned the old man, with a low laugh. "That is for a sea-dog like me, that's been on the look-out aloft for many a long hour. D'ye see the patch of blue mist on the sky, this side the sun? That's smoke. And it don't come from no old woman's kitchen-fire, neither. That line of smoke has been trailed across the broad Atlantic, if I ain't badly mistaken."

He slowly turned his eyes, to observe with whom he had been speaking. There stood before him a white-haired gentleman, of apparently his own age, but fashionably dressed, and supporting his steps upon a gold-headed cane. He presented a strong contrast in appearance, and in his handsome face and clear complexion, to the old tar.

By his side was a young lady, a bright-faced, beautiful girl, with warm, earnest blue eyes, and a mouth in which the strong lines of that of the gentleman were softened into feminine grace and beauty. She was simply but gracefully dressed, and swung her

light chip hat in her hand, letting the soft breeze play with her clustering brown hair.

"Glad to see you out so 'arly this mornin', Mr. Darlington," said the old man, with a nod of the head. "And my little May Rose, too. But ain't you afeard the salt air mought spile that satin skin of yours? Our young lady folks don't generally trust it."

"It is your suns more than your airs we fear," she replied, in a tone of liquid music. "Your suns do burn one dreadfully."

She raised her parasol as she spoke, and directed it toward the sunlight, which was now pouring in a broad swath across the waters.

"I'm a good sample of that," and the old sailor laughed. "Though I've been tanned by hotter suns than any you are likely to ever see in this latitude."

"I should think that our own sun might do its work tolerably well," said Mr. Darlington. "But how beautifully it kindles the waters. And how bright and gentle everything is. One would scarcely fancy that sleeping ocean could ever become a raging tyrant."

"But you never have any great storms here, Mr. Halyard?" asked the young lady, appealingly. "Why, I have been to the beach every summer for years, and it always seems quiet. The surf, of course—but that is only the breathing of the giant."

"Ay, ay!" replied the sailor, a smile crossing his weather-beaten face, "it is a pretty summer play-thing. You should run down here in winter, now and then, Miss Rose, if you'd like to see old ocean fairly waked up. Of course it knows how to keep its temper when it's got such sweet blue eyes as yours on it."

"Thanks," laughing. "I did not fish for that compliment, at any rate. But is it so stormy in winter?"

"Bless you, little one, you'd think the whole sea was turned topsy-turvy sometimes. And it's hard to tell what's sea, and what's cloud, and what's sky, for the whole gets jumbled together. Where we're standing now the water dashes up in young mountains. You'd think it was goin' to lick up all Beach City in one sweep of its great tongue. And the roar!—well, thunder's a baby to it."

"And vessels dashed ashore like floating chips, I suppose?" said Mr. Darlington.

"No, no," replied the old man, shaking his head. "Not like chips. Chips don't carry living souls. And chips don't groan like flesh and blood under the whip-lash of the waters. I wouldn't like you to see the sights this quiet beach has known, Miss Rose. Nor you neither, Mr. Darlington. There's some things that's too tryin' to a feelin' heart. D'ye see them old ribs?"

He pointed to the broken skeleton of a ship, the ends of whose worn timbers barely showed themselves above the surface of the sands.

"Yes. I have often wondered as to the history of that good ship," returned Mr. Darlington. "I remember it several years ago, when it stood much higher."

"That's the way the sea has of burying her dead. She hides them slowly, slowly—but surely. Another summer and you will not see a trace of that craft, and there will be few left to remember it but we old water-dogs who saw it come ashore."

The old man's voice fell, and he shook his head sorrowfully as if he was mourning the death of a friend.

"You saw it wrecked?" exclaimed Rose, eagerly. "You, Mr. Halyard? Then I want you to tell me all about it!"

She seated herself beside him, and laid her soft hand, in her earnestness, on his horny paw.

"Yes, my May Rose," he replied, his rough face softening. "I'd be the last one to forget it. That old wreck brung me the greatest treasure of my life."

"Oh, now you shall tell me the story of the wreck!" she cried. "For I know that there must be some interesting story."

"Don't take much to interest you young folks. Won't you set down, Mr. Darlington? It's as cheap as standin'."

"I am not tired. Go on, Mr. Halyard. You have got me almost as anxious as Rose."

"Almost! Do you hear that?" cried Rose, with affected irony. "Oh, yes! it is only the girls that care about sailors' yarns. Almost! Why, I am just listening because I know that Mr. Halyard is anxious to tell it."

"Yes, you butterfly!" said the old sailor, laying his other palm upon her soft hand, and gently stroking it. "Of course you don't care about wrecks. Let us walk on, Mr. Darlington, and not bother little Rose with our old talk."

"You dare!" she exclaimed, clasping his hand firmly in hers. "Now go on, sir. You shall not escape till the whole story is told."

The old man laughed at her impetuosity. But his face sobered down to a quieter expression as he began his recital.

"It was fifteen years ago last winter," he commenced. "We'd had nor'-west gales for a week, off and on. Such as are likely to come in January. There had been more than one wreck up and down the coast, but our beach here had somehow 'scaped. One night—after midnight it was—the wind rose to a perfect hurricane. I never seed'd a wuss blow in the West Indies. And you'd thought the whole sea was jist comin' ashore, the way it pounded and roared. There weren't many souls a-bed, you can be sure. I was standin' jist back of where we are now—couldn't have stood here, for this was the sea's acre, and it was giving warnin' 'gainst trespassers. Well, it mought have been five hours after midnight when we heard a gun to win'ard—the diabolical sound mortal ears ever heered in a storm like that."

"I should imagine so," said Mr. Darlington. "Everybody was in a stew in a minute. There weren't as many folks here in them days as now, for Beach City wasn't a summering place then. But there was enough of us Jerseymen to be anxious. Well, that gun kept poundin' way out to sea at last, but gettin' closer. And it were so dark you couldn't have seen lightnin', let alone a ship. The poor doomed critter fought hard for her life. And I was just as stirred up as if I'd been aboard her myself. I've been in sich predicaments, more than once."

"I have no doubt of that," confessed Mr. Darlington, as the narrator paused.

"Yes, more than twice. But this ain't my own yarn now. Well, she fought the storm for two mortal hours; but the gun-shots come closer and closer; and when daylight lit up the east we caught a glimpse of her."

"Near the beach?" asked Rose, in deep interest. "She didn't look a hand's-breadth off. It was a fair sized three-master, English rigged, though she hardly spread a rag of sail. Jist one look settled her hash. She hadn't as much chance for life as a butterfly in a hurricane. And as for launching a lifeboat, you mought as well have tried to go to sea in a tub. She struck almost the fust minute we spied her."

"And were they all lost?" "That's what I am comin' to. They launched their boats; but no boat ever lived in sich a sea. They stove like pipe-stems. And it was hardly ten minutes afore the ship broke amidships. I'd have liked then to be twenty miles away, for it was a sorrowful business to have to stand there with your hands tied and see sich a noble craft go to pieces, and so many living souls sink to Davy Jones's locker. But there weren't no help for it."

"But they weren't all lost?" asked Rose, with tears in her eyes. "Don't say they were all lost."

"All but two," he replied, solemnly. "One was a sailor, who was dragged, half-dead, from the surf. And he was so battered by the waves that it pounded all the senses out of him. When he come to every speck of his memory was gone. And we've never knowed from that day to this the name of that ship, for the ocean didn't leave a thing that she could be told by."

"But there were two saved, you say. Who was the other?"

"That was my treasure," the old man quietly replied. "The waves tossed it nearly ashore—something like a baby's cradle. It was just suckin' it back ag'in when I tumbled into the surf like a boy. You mought have s'posed that I didn't know nothin' about water the way I risked myself. And all for a baby's cradle."

"You hard-hearted old fellow," said Rose, pressing his hand softly.

"I dunno how it was. If it'd been a man I don't believe I'd had the courage. Howsomer, in I jumped and grabbed the cradle. And Jack Sprat, one of our neighbors here, grabbed me. And somebody grabbed Jack Sprat. And if they hadn't pulled hard I wouldn't have been about to tell you this yarn to-day."

"But you saved the cradle? And there was something in it?" cried Rose, breathlessly.

"The prettiest boy baby that ever you sot eyes on. And he's alive to-day. Heaven be thanked, and there ain't his equal in all the Jarseys. And that's what the wreck brought to old Tom Halyard."

"But you never found out whose child he was?" asked Mr. Darlington, with a look of peculiar interest. "Was there no name, or nothing to know him by?"

"Hardly a speck. The sea had swept the cradle clean. And the baby had only one little garment on, that was fine enough to show that it was a gentleman's child. But, not a speck of a name. I've got the cradle and the garment yet."

"And will you let me see them?" asked Mr. Darlington, with what seemed an uncalled-for anxiety.

"Sartin," responded the old sailor, with some surprise at Mr. Darlington's excited look.

"But you say that the boy is living yet," demanded Rose. "It isn't—"

"Yes, it is. It is Fred Halyard—my own son by adoption from the sea, and the nattiest, handsomest, sharpest, and best-hearted boy that ever knotted a rope or faced a nor'wester."

"And it's a mighty bad business, old Tom," spoke a voice behind him.

"What's that?" cried the old man, sharply turning.

"Only that Fred's among the missing," returned the speaker, a stalwart young man, dressed in a waterman's garb. "We gave chase last night to a boat-load of smugglers, and took Fred as helmsman. The hounds flung us in the inlets, and Fred jumped ashore to follow them afoot—and—"

"And what?" cried the old man, leaping up and seizing him by the collar. "Don't say that any harm's come to the boy, or I'll throttle ye!"

There was an agony in the old sailor's look, and a deep intensity of tone, that showed he meant this for no idle threat.

"We lost him, that was all. We hunted him for an hour, but he was not to be found. And now here's daylight and no Fred. I'm afeared the confounded smugglers have gobbled him up."

"And what are you standing here for?" cried old Tom, sending the man staggering away with a thrust of his vigorous arm. "Why ain't you out in the inlet arter him? If he's harmed I won't forget you soon. Come—there ain't no time to stand here driveling."

The old man darted away with the speed of a racer, followed by the coast-guard boatman, leaving

Mr. Darlington and his daughter scarcely less excited and surprised.

CHAPTER IV. THE MILKMAN'S PRIZE.

ROSE DARLINGTON and her father walked slowly together up the beach, after the hasty departure of old Tom Halyard.

"It will be too dreadful if anything serious has happened," she said, with clasped hands. "After his being saved from the sea, too, in such a way; and no one to know anything about him, except that he is a gentleman's child. And the only person who was saved with him to have quite lost his memory. What makes you look so strange, papa?"

"Why, did I look strange?" asked Mr. Darlington, with a slight start. "I must have been deeply interested in your romance, indeed. That sailor may have recovered his memory!"

This was said in an aside, as if he had forgotten his daughter's presence.

"Oh! and you are going to seek him, and find out all about Fred Halyard! Now, that's a dear, good papa! I am so glad of that!"

"I do not know but that old Tom has the best right to him, even if his real father could be found," mused Mr. Darlington.

"But he has to live among rough people, and hunt smugglers, and all that. Who are these smugglers, papa? I did not know that there was any smuggling done along here."

"The Custom-House authorities have been suspicious of this coast for some time," replied her father. "It is so easy to send a boat-load of silks or of cigars ashore in these complicated inlets. An officer has been sent down here, and has engaged a boat's crew of the men of the life-saving service, who are not on duty in the summer."

"Are those the men whom I have seen at the red house below the city?"

"Yes. That is the life-saving station."

Meanwhile old Tom and his companion had reached the causeway leading across the marsh. A wagon here came briskly along, whose high tin cans showed that it belonged to a vender of milk. The milkman, a plain-featured countryman, stopped his horse as they approached.

"Hallo! old Tom!" he ejaculated. "In a hurry for milk this mornin'? Couldn't wait till I got inter town?"

"I am not after you," cried the old man, hastily, as he ran on.

"Then you're arter somethin' in a desperate hurry. Now jest pull up and tell me what's lost. Mebbe I can help you a trifle."

"Have you seen anything in the marsh?" demanded old Tom, breathlessly.

"I've seen many a thing, from a bullfrog to a bittern," returned the countryman. "And I guesses I know what you want. It's the boy Fred you're racing arter, ain't it now?"

"Sartin it is. You've seen him? Where is he?" The old man's voice had all the impetuosity of youth.

"If you holler so you'll wake the lad. You'll find him back here in the wagon. And, bless his honest face, he's fast asleep. Don't rouse him," he continued, as old Tom hastily sprang up onto the shaft. "I carklerate the lad's jest tucked out, and we'd best let him have his nap through."

"But, where did you find him? Tell me the whole story!" exclaimed the father, after a long, loving look at the calmly-sleeping face in the wagon. "He is drenched with water."

"Now see here, old Tom, I'll catch rats from my customers if I keep them waitin' for the milk. You jest walk alongside, and I'll tell you all I know; which ain't much."

He proceeded to tell how, while driving along the causeway, he had heard a loud hallo, and seen a tall figure standing on the bank of the inlet that bordered the road. The next moment this person had fallen into the water, and seemed to be making a desperate struggle to swim across.

"The poor creature sunk more than once," continued the milkman. "So I jest jumped out of the wagon, and when he riz ag'in I had him by the collar quick as a flash, and out on the bank. Bless your eyes, it wasn't a spark of wonder he couldn't swim, fer he was blinded by a big cloth, and had his hands tied behind him. Salt wouldn't have saved him if Tony Lumkin hadn't been on hand."

They had now gained the beach, where they met Mr. Darlington and his daughter, who stood waiting in intense expectancy.

"Is he safe? Have you found him?" demanded Rose, too deeply excited to wait for some of the others to speak.

The reply came from an unexpected quarter. A voice sounded from the rear of the wagon:

"Safe! I guess so. Let me out, Tony."

And a tall, lithe figure leaped lightly from the vehicle. They hardly knew him at first, with the wet hair streaming down over his face. His clothes were covered with mud, with which his face was also thickly streaked.

"I am all right, father," he cried, warmly clasping the old man's hand. "And whom have we here? Ah! Mr. Darlington and Miss Rose. I hope you will excuse my looks. I have had a hard night of it. But that will never do," he continued, as he put his hand to his face, and withdrew it covered with mud. "I must make myself more presentable."

He turned as he spoke, and in a minute had leaped into the surf, which was thundering away not twenty feet from where they stood. It did not take old ocean long to make Fred's toilet. He dashed the wet hair from his eyes, and came back streaming, but with the fresh color in his cheeks, and the clear

light in his glance, which added so much to his youthful beauty.

"You have had a serious time of it, Fred," remarked Mr. Darlington.

"Yes," returned the boy, indifferently. "Some folks might not like it."

"See here, Fred Halyard," exclaimed the old man, whose excitement had to find vent in some direction, "don't you go playin' innocent in that raskally provokin' way. I don't want no puttin' on airs."

Rose looked as if she indorsed Mr. Halyard's opinion, and Fred felt somewhat abashed, as he caught the expression of her speaking eye.

"Of course I am ready to tell all I know," he replied. "But it is a long story, and I am not too fresh. Hadn't we best go up to the house?"

"Sartin! sartin!" and the old man seized Fred's arm. "Poor boy! I'm afeared you've had a siege. Come on, folks; we'll jest step up and take cheers, and hear what the lad has to say in comfort."

They were now joined by Mr. Proctor, the officer of the customs, who had but lately heard of the preceding night's adventure, and was anxious to learn the boy's story.

And Fred gave it to them, in all its details. He found it not unpleasant to be lionized, and made the most of the exciting story of his adventures.

"But have you any idea where the locality is?" asked Mr. Proctor. "Can we trace the hiding-place of the smugglers?"

"I have an idea," replied Fred.

"Good for you, boy. Where is the place?"

"I'll tell you when I find out," was the quiet answer. "I've got to work my traverse first. If it's all right we've got them. If it's all wrong we ain't. And that's all I've got to say now."

And he meant it, for no questioning could bring anything further from him on the subject.

CHAPTER V.

RESCUED FROM THE SEA.

ABOUT ten o'clock the next morning Fred Halyard was walking briskly through one of the side streets of the town. He was dressed in a suit of blue flannel, which would answer very well for a bathing-dress, and looked as if he had done duty in that direction already.

Turning a corner he found himself suddenly face to face with Rose Darlington. She was accompanied by a young gentleman, a well-dressed, good-looking, but supercilious personage, whose eyes fixed themselves on Fred with the look that an earl might give to a herdsman.

"Mr. Halyard!" exclaimed Rose, stopping in her walk. "Then you have entirely recovered? I am glad to see that."

"I thank you for your interest," he replied. "I am none the worse for my adventure."

"Excuse me, Miss Darlington," interposed the youth beside her, who had stood impatiently twirling his cane. "Had we not better go on? We will be looked for."

"I have no objection to be looked for," answered Rose, with curling lip. "Good-day, Mr. Halyard, and do avoid any more such dangers."

"I shall do my best," responded Fred. "Only I hope they will avoid me. I am not responsible for myself in such cases."

He caught the eye of Rose's gentleman friend as he spoke. It was fixed upon him with an expression which Fred did not relish. A quick gleam shot into his eyes, and he flashed a glance of defiance on that young gentleman, which made him lower his gaze.

Fred walked on, with a parting bow to his fair friend, but with a heightened color.

"Who is that fellow?" demanded the supercilious young man, with a strong emphasis on the "fellow."

"One of my friends," was the quiet, but decided response.

"Not a very creditable friend. He might pass for a fisherman's apprentice."

"He might be, for all I would care," retorted Rose, with spirit. "I am much more interested in what the *man* is, than in what his *business* is."

"Now, that is all very well. But it will not wash, you know. Such fellows are no acquaintances for you."

"I hardly understand your allusion to the wash-tub," rejoined Rose, in a tone of scorn. "I fear I have not been properly educated in slang. Those fellows with whom I associate are not in the habit of using it."

"But—you know—" faltered the young man, somewhat abashed. "But, who is this chap?"

"I think you would hardly care to know," she replied. "If you do, I will introduce you the next time we meet. For the present, suppose we change the subject."

The storm was passed, but the clouds yet hung on the horizon of their faces, as they walked onward.

Meanwhile, Fred was entertaining no better opinion of the haughty young gentleman, than the latter had of him.

"I wonder which of the royal families he is descended from?" he asked himself. "I hope he will keep clear of me, for I have not a mite of respect for blue blood."

We will not follow Fred foot by foot. He was in search of the spot in the marsh at which the boatmen had left him. He finally discovered it, tracing back his own tracks through the mud.

"Here's the boat-hook, or I don't know my own handwriting!" he exclaimed, looking at a long depression in the soft soil. "Now, for my mile-post."

He had brought a long stick in his hand, which he forced into the mud, leaving several feet of its length displayed.

Along the distant shore of the mainland ran a

ridge, that was dotted at frequent intervals with houses. Fred gazed at them intently.

"I'd wager a fortune I could pick out a half-dozen houses that would have our game among them. But it wouldn't be square to search an honest farmer's house for smuggled goods. We will have to take to the boats and measure my lines."

He turned and began to make his way back to the causeway.

About the same time Mr. Darlington and old Tom were walking slowly down toward the beach.

"S'pose ye'd find that the boy had a mint of money," exclaimed the old man, "d'ye think I'd go for that? Would it make him an ace the happier? He's got good looks and good health, and good education. What more does any one want?"

"There are more things which people think advantages."

"Of course they do. Don't I know that?" ejaculated old Tom. "There's 'vantages at wine-drinkin', and gamblin', and sportin'. There's chances at loafin' and idlin'. There's openin's for gout and rheumatics. There's opportunities at back-bitin'. And there's worriments of mind enough to turn a man gray afore he's thirty—if he ain't buried hisself afore that time. I know somethin' 'bout these 'vantages of money, and I hope that Fred will alers keep poor, and honest, and industrious."

"It may be that you are more than half-right," Mr. Darlington admitted, reflectively.

"I am more than three-quarters right," continued the old sailor. "Jist 'bout the heaviest weight to carry in this world is a heavy pile of money. And it weighs down a man's soul as often as it does his hands. I shouldn't keer to go inter the next world with the weight that money lays on some folks' souls. I jist hope that Fred will 'scape all sich 'vantages."

"But it is our duty to find his parents, if possible?"

"He ain't got no parent 'cept old Tom Halyard," cried the old sailor, angrily. "An' he don't want none. What's he goin' to keer for strangers as he never see'd nor heard of? D'ye think he'd feel for them as he does for me, that's brung him up since he was a baby, and done for him, if I do say it, more than if he'd been my own? I knowed there weren't no clew on that garment or in the cradle, or I doubt if I'd 'a' kept 'em. I've got the best right to the baby that the sea brung me."

They walked on in silence for some minutes, the old man slowly cooling down from his excitement.

"I should be sorry to interfere with your right," Mr. Darlington at length said, "though you must not forget that the true parents of the child have their rights, also. However, so far as I can see, there seems to be no chance of discovering them."

"That's true enough," averred old Tom, eagerly. "I've tried it, long afore I see'd you. Jim Bandy, the sailor as was saved with Fred, has got the whole story laid away somewhere in his brain. But his memory is clean gone. He's got to 'arn every-thing new, like a new-born baby."

"Has he taken to the sea again?"

"No. He keeps an ale-house at Crockettstown, between here and Philadelphia. He's 'arn't enough to measure out a glass of ale."

It was now the bathing hour, and the beach was at its liveliest. Hundreds were in the line of the surf, being tossed like chips on the surging waters, or buried beneath some wave of unusual height.

Suddenly there came a change in the spirit of fun that prevailed. People looked at each other, and then out to sea, with dilated eyes. Their gaze was concentrated on one point.

"By all that's bad, they've been caught in the undertow!" exclaimed old Tom, pointing to two figures visible beyond the line of bathers, and seemingly struggling with the overpowering waters.

One of them was further in than the other, and was swimming manfully. The other was floating helplessly outward.

"He's all right," cried old Tom, indignantly. "He can swim like a fish. But he's leavin' the lady to take care of herself. And she'll be down under the waters afore two minutes, if she ain't saved."

The struggling figure at this moment lifted above the waves, with her face turned shoreward.

"Merciful heavens! It cannot be Rose!" cried Mr. Darlington, in a voice full of agony, and staggering backward as if he had received a heavy blow.

His cry was echoed by a voice behind him, and an agile figure darted like lightning down the beach.

"Keep up, Mr. Darlington," cried old Tom. "There goes my Fred. He'll bring her ashore if there's a ghost of a show."

It was indeed Fred Halyard, who had just returned from the marsh. In a moment he had plunged through the surf, and was battling with the waves. All eyes eagerly followed him as he swam gallantly outward. He was rapidly approaching the struggling girl, calling to her cheerily.

But a groan arose from all observers as a wave dashed over her, and she sunk out of sight. Fred was not ten feet away. One strong stroke more, and he too disappeared beneath the waters.

The moment of terrible suspense was succeeded by a glad shout. The swimmer had risen again to the surface, bearing with him the girlish form of the bather.

Fortunately for Fred she did not struggle. Arranging her with her hands on his shoulders he swam inward, with an easy but strong stroke. In, in he came. And now a breaker aided, dashing him far inward. Catching his light freight in his arms he let his feet fall. He was within easy touching distance of the bottom. In a minute more he had dashed forward into shallow water.

The companion of the rescued lady had just reached the shore. He stood shame-faced under the scornful looks that were cast upon him. It was

the young gentleman with whom Fred had met her that morning.

But a shout of glad congratulation greeted the gallant lad as he placed the rescued girl within the arms of her father, who clasped her to his heart with yearning joy.

"She is safe and well," Fred quietly remarked to the excited group around them. "But she had best be taken in from the beach. Here comes the bathers. We shall soon be smothered in a flight of water-soaked locusts."

Rose turned, with a wan smile on her face, and held out her hand.

"Thank you," was all she could say.

"There, there! not another word," murmured Fred, clasping the diminutive hand in an earnest pressure.

"You'd best both get away from here," advised old Tom. "Here comes the locusts, and they'll eat the lad alive if they can't get at the lady."

They took his advice, and there was a hasty retreat from the coming throng of bathers.

Rose's dejected cavalier had already disappeared.

CHAPTER VI.

WHAT CAME OF A HOP.

"THERE was a sound of revelry by night," if we may quote the words of the poet, in relation to the hop taking place at the Mansion House, the fashionable hotel at Beach City.

The music throbbed and vibrated until it seemed as if the air was instinct with sweet sounds. It floated out through the streets and over the sands, where the breakers thundered like a perpetual anvil chorus, under the softer tones which mingled so delicately with their monotonous roar.

And half the city had gathered there, to throng the broad hall of the hotel, or seek the cool night air on its wide, inviting porches, or wander through the grounds at a distance that softened the mellow beat of the waltz tune into dreamy sweetness.

Young men and maidens, full of the love-inspiring charm of melody, roamed through the shadowy gloom, side by side, or hand in hand, their hearts instinct with the throbbing tune, to which their voices softened in unison.

And old trade-hardened merchants, to whom "percentage" was the one magic word, felt something breaking up within them, as if the wintry ice of their natures was yielding to the warm sun of the spring-tide; and knew not that it was the music that involuntarily brought them back to the far-off days of their happy youth.

Within the ball-room the scene was brilliant in the extreme. There the gloom and the subdued melody that ruled without, were exchanged for a brilliant flood of gaslight, that filled every nook of the immense room with gleaming luster; while the instruments rung out with much of the magic of that marvelous violin, which has made whole villages involuntarily dance, from the toddling child to the trembling grandfather.

Much of the same effect seemed produced here, the floor being thronged with active waltzers, winding through a maze of bewildering intricacy, the play of rich colors, and the incessant flash of jewels, giving to the scene a most enchanting effect.

It was, indeed, hard to resist the charm of that festive music and gay dancing throng. Rose Darlington, who had come down to the ball-room, simply to show that she was none the worse for her morning's adventure, was drawn irresistibly into the tide. It was partly, however, to please her father, who wished to be assured that she had fully recovered her strength and spirits, and who fancied that his Rose was only made for music, laughter, and dancing.

As yet, she was, to him, a mere girl, and he failed to recognize that she was developing into an earnest and true-hearted woman.

"A waltz with me, now, Rose," whispered the young gentleman who had been her escort that morning. "You know you have promised me."

"Not now. You will excuse me. I am not fit to dance to-night."

"But, you have just been dancing."

"Yes, to please papa. But I find that I have not the strength for it—and hardly the heart for it, either. You will have to wait for a more fitting opportunity."

"You are angry with me, Rose. You will not dance because—"

"Because you deserted me in a time of danger, Mr. Howard? Is that what you would say? You are mistaken. I expected nothing more from you."

His tone had displayed anger, and she answered him with indignation.

"I should have saved you, Rose, if I had been able. I could barely save myself. I have not the skill of that water-dog, who—"

"No more," demurred Rose, quietly. "We will be observed. What has been done by deeds cannot be undone by words."

She walked away as she spoke, and rejoined her father, who stood at the end of the room, observing the dancers.

Mr. Howard's face was deeply flushed as he left the ball-room. Rose's quiet tones had stung him more deeply than if they had been barbed lances.

He sought the bar-room of the hotel, where a group of young men of his acquaintance stood conversing.

"Come, boys," he cried, with enforced hilarity. "You are wasting time here. What will you drink?"

The young men, nothing loth, responded readily to this invitation.

"Hey, Will!" exclaimed one of them. "Don't you expect to break your fast again to-night, that

you are pouring out brandy with such a strong hand as that?"

"I'm tired, George," was the reply; "I want something to tone me up. What say you to a stroll out in the air?"

"I am agreeable," was the reply, and the two friends walked away, leaving the others to resume their conversation.

We must precede them to a point where other friends of ours were gathered. This consisted of a group of four persons, composed of Mr. Proctor, the custom-house officer; Harry Bains, the man who had pulled the stroke-car in the chase of the smugglers; old Tom Halyard and his son Fred, who had so distinguished himself that day.

The latter appeared to be the principal spokesman of the group, the others listening intently to his observations.

"I expected that we'd put it through, and maybe grab them this afternoon," remarked Fred. "But it isn't so comfortable to be abroad when everybody wants to make a lion of a fellow. Some may like that sort of thing, but I ain't the one."

"You acted like a man, Fred," declared Harry Bains. "And if that's lionizing you, you've got to put it in your pipe and smoke it. But these butter-flies will soon have some other plaything, so we can safely go ahead to-morrow."

"That is, if Fred's plan is not a will-o'-the-wisp," remarked Mr. Proctor. "I never have much confidence in mysteries."

"Boys generally do make mountains out of mole-hills," returned old Tom. "But I don't think Fred's one of that kind."

"Guess not," Fred quietly replied. "I was out this morning, Mr. Proctor, and got my points all laid. So I don't calculate to make it a mystery any longer. Not from you, that is."

"That's the chap to reef a top-gallant sail!" cried old Tom, exultingly. "Heave ahead, lad!"

"My story is not a very long one," Fred modestly responded. "I've worked a triangulation on them, that's all. I laid out my base line to-day. I've got the length of the two other lines. We've only got to bring these lines together to a point, and we've nailed the smugglers."

"I don't quite understand you," said Mr. Proctor, dubiously.

"Think you can find the spot, Harry Bains, where they took me prisoner?"

"Easy enough. Your signal reeds must be still where you left them."

"And I've got the spot nailed where they left me. These are our two starting points. Now if we know the distance from these two points to their hiding-place, we've only got to bring the two lines together."

"That's all mighty well!" interrupted old Tom. "But how is a chap tied hand and foot, and gagged and blinded to boot, going to know anything 'bout distance? You wasn't in no trim to throw the log. And you couldn't swear if you were an hour or ten minutes on the inlets."

"If I can't measure it within twenty feet I'll sell out," Fred confidently decided.

"But how?" asked Mr. Proctor, curiously. "I don't see your process."

"I had my ears," explained Fred. "They didn't gag them."

"But who ever measured with their ears?" exclaimed his father, with a show of indignation.

"I did!" returned Fred.

"Come, come boy! You are making a confoundedly long story of this," interposed Harry Bains.

"That's because you talk as if you didn't half believe me," retorted Fred. "If you saw a carriage on the beach there, and wanted to gauge its distance, how would you go about it?"

"Hang me if I know!" admitted old Tom.

"We might count how often the wheels turned round," suggested Mr. Proctor.

"You have it there," cried Fred. "That is my whole secret."

"What thunderin' nonsense!" growled the old sailor. "The boat didn't run on wheels. And you weren't in shape to see them, if it did."

"It went with oars then, and I was in shape to hear them. The fact is, I counted how many oar-strokes it took on each course. It took just 1857 pulls to reach the hiding-place, and 1240 on our return trip, and anybody with a pair of oars can measure that over again."

They stood for a moment in silent surprise at this simple explanation of Fred's mystery. Then old Tom grasped his hand with a clutch that was enough to break its bones.

"You ought to be look-out on a three-decker, Fred; hang me if you oughtn't!" he ejaculated. "I allers said that brains was better than eyes; and I'll stick to it while there's a reef-rope holds in this old carcass."

"How did they pull, Fred? with a long or short stroke?" asked Mr. Proctor.

"A long, stretching reach," answered Fred.

"You're a jewel, Fred. We will measure your lines with our oars to-morrow morning. Think you would know the place if you got in it?"

"Sure of that," confidently. "I've got two good marks to tell it by."

"It will be worth your while, boy, if we can lay hands on this cargo. These customers don't deal in cheap goods."

After a few minutes more thus occupied in conversation they separated, Fred strolling toward the Mansion House, drawn thither by the double attraction of music and the gleaming light.

He stood awhile on a corner of the perch, at some distance from the crowd, listening to the enlivening strains of the brilliant dance music.

He was so wrapped up in enjoyment that he failed

to perceive two gentlemen, who came arm in arm down the porch, humming the air which the band was playing.

The first intimation Fred had of their presence was a rude surge against him that almost threw him from his feet.

They had either not seen him, or had intentionally tried to overthrow him. Fred quickly recovered his footing, his eyes flashing with anger.

"Get out of the way now, Jersey," warned the taller of the two young men, with a rather thickened utterance. "What are you doing here, when you ought to be on the beach, hunting clams?"

Fred made no reply; but his breath came with labor, and his hands were involuntarily clenched.

"Come, Will," called out the other of the two men. "Don't be getting up a disturbance here."

"Disturbance be shot! What business has this sand-hopper in a gentleman's way? Who are you, bumpkin? And what keeps you there looking like a dead stick?"

Fred turned away with an exclamation of disdain.

"If you were sober I might take the trouble to show you who I am," he retorted. "As it is, I don't think I'll waste words on you."

"Do you hear the insulting hound, George?" cried Will, angrily. "Do you suppose I am going to stand that?"

"Come, come, Will. This is no place to raise a disturbance. See! people's attention is already attracted."

"I don't care a fig," exclaimed Will. "I am not going to let this sand snipe tell me that I am drunk."

Fred had walked some steps away. He now turned sharply and faced the half-tipsy youth.

"I have no objection to tell you who I am. And I can tell you who you are in the same breath. You are the sneak and coward that left your lady friend sinking in the surf. I am the one that saved her. Will that satisfy you?"

The young man started back in some discomfiture at this announcement. He soon recovered his assurance, however.

"I know you now," he exclaimed. "It was you that insulted Miss Darlington in the street this morning. I did not want to raise trouble then. But it is not too late to chastise you now."

"See here, my friend, this is no place to bandy a lady's name. You had better take him away and pour some cold water on his head"—to Will's comrade.

"If he wants to find me I can be seen at the coast-guard-house, down the beach, at any hour after daylight to-morrow. If he is anxious to have his fine coat dusted he can have a chance there. But we have had enough of his drunken brawling here."

Fred turned and walked steadily away, paying no further attention to the utterances of his tipsy antagonist.

CHAPTER VII.

A QUEER "CHOICE OF WEAPONS."

"COME, Fred," said old Tom Halyard, meeting the lad on his way home. "It is time that old blood like mine, and young blood like yours, too, was safe abed. Those dancing snips, that spend half the day snoozin', can afford to spend half the night at to-tippin'; but I've a notion that you and me mought want to be abroad 'rly to-morrow."

"Why?" replied Fred. "Is there anything special afoot?"

"Where's your eyes, boy? I thought you knew the weather sign better. Look yonder to win'ward. D'ye see that white line, there where the moon'll spring in a couple of hours? And the wind has veered two points to the north-east in the last half-hour. Mr. Darlington was axing yesterday if theseen ever got on its mettle down here. I shouldn't wonder if he'd see a touch of its temper long afore another sunset."

Fred turned his eyes in the direction indicated, and closely observed the aspect of the sky.

"I noticed that before," he remarked, "but I did not know its meaning."

"It means wind," replied the old sailor. "And more than a cap-full, if I'm not mistaken. There's some mare's tails dipping down into the streak. Take it all in, Fred. It's part of your eddication. And now we'd best turn in."

"I'll sleep at the coast-guard-house," returned Fred. "If there's danger I want to be on the ground."

"Right, boy," cried the old man, clapping Fred's shoulder. "There's sound wood in your young hull. Better down on duty than die shirking. But keep your weather-eye open, lad. Remember that old Tom can't spare ye cheap."

Fred left his father with an affectionate clasp of the hand—which would have been a kiss only that the old salt disapproved of what he called "maundering."

Ere he sought his bed he turned for another look at the sky. The lurid line had slightly widened since he saw it last. Some light shreds of clouds crossed it, drawn into hair-like lines. The wind was growing stronger, and a mournful, sighing sound came from the sea, as if it felt in its deep heart the coming storm.

Fred shook his head doubtfully, and slowly entered the house, in which, indeed, most of his nights were spent.

Old Tom's prediction proved a true one. Long before morning the wind was rushing by in short, quick puffs that shook the house to its foundations. And the surf was beating with trip-hammer blows upon the hard sands, while the wind sheared the foaming crests of the waves, and tossed its white burden far inland.

Morning broke upon a lurid and terrifying scene. The wind had now risen to a hard, steady gale, broken only by occasional squalls, which passed

with a whistle that was almost a scream, and rocked the house as if it would carry it bodily away. The evening clouds had been blown from the sky, and only driving patches of vapor here and there decked the azure hue of the heavens.

The sea was grand, with the grandeur of terror. The surf of the preceding day was but a child's toy to the vast billows which now rolled in, breaking in tones of thunder upon the white sands, tossing their broken fragments almost up to the level of the city, and dashing against the face of the sandhills which bordered the beach below the town.

It was a scene long to be remembered. The foaming wave crests were cut as with a knife by the winds, and the air was full of flecks of foam borne inward, but soon torn into indistinguishable shreds.

No one slept late that morning in Beach City, and many a face was whitened with terror, or stilled with the shadow of a great awe, as they for the first time turned upon the ocean in its might. It was strangely different from the summer seas from which they had gained their previous impressions of the great Atlantic. Beauty was gone, and sublimity had taken its place.

The inmates of the red house had been long astrid. Early daybreak found them on the beach, from which they had drawn back their boats inside the danger line, while they were busily preparing certain other essentials in case of a wreck.

So far no sail was visible in the offing, and it was hoped that every craft had taken the alarm in time to run out to sea.

"There's only one thing of any use in a blow like this; and that's sea room," declared Harry Bains, as he coiled a slender rope beside an instrument that looked like a short cannon. "I pity the poor devils who haven't sniffed this gale in the air. To be caught on a lee shore in such a blow is certain ruin."

"And it's a high old morning for a duel," remarked Fred. "One would have to shoot well to windward."

"What's that about a duel, boy?" asked Harry, looking up from his rope.

"Nothing of much account," replied Fred, indifferently. "I challenged a city snipe last night; that was all. The fool wanted to raise a row on the Mansion House porch. I told him if satisfaction was the one hope of his life that I might be found here any time after daylight this morning. I guess, though, he will hardly care to face this wind, and a flogging into the bargain."

"Well, if you ain't quick on the trigger!" protested Harry. "Why, you were in bunk not twenty minutes after I left you. You didn't stir up a quarrel in that time?"

"There's nothing quicker stirred than a fight. If one man is full of fire and another full of gunpowder a blow-up is going to follow. I fancy, though, this will be only a flash in the pan. The fellow has more blow than backbone—Hullo! By Heaven! Harry, there she lifts!"

Fred sprang excitedly forward on giving this exclamation. He grasped a long spy-glass that lay on a chair beside Harry, and in an instant had it to his eye, looking out to sea in a north-easterly direction.

Harry had also risen, and was shading his eyes as he looked seaward.

"Whereaway, Fred? I don't catch it. Can you make out anything?"

"Yes. You are looking too far out. Here, off the swell of Turtle Island. I make it out a barque, of considerable tonnage. She is hauled close to the wind, but is a good deal too near shore for comfort."

He handed Harry the glass. He had just caught sight of the sail, and now gazed intently upon her for several minutes.

"There's work cut out for us, boys," he said to the men, who had gathered around with earnest, serious faces. "There is no salvation for that chap. He can't claw off in the teeth of this gale; and no anchor will hold on our bottom."

The expression of the men showed that they fully agreed with him.

"Will he clear the island?" asked Fred.

"Yes. Though it will be a close rasp. It's a dead pity but there were more water in the inlet. But it wouldn't be safe for over a ten-foot draft on the bar, even with this gale."

They silently watched the laboring vessel, which had come much more plainly into sight during their colloquy. The sun had risen for some time, and was playing upon the waters as brightly as if this was but a summer zephyr. It now touched the sails of the approaching vessel with a warm promise that did not seem likely to be realized.

The mariners were apparently well aware of their peril, for at this moment the heavy boom of a cannon came thundering upon the air, stirring up as with an electric shock the groups that had gathered in front of the city, but who had not yet seen the distant ship.

"I hope they will keep where they are. If there is work to do, I would rather not have such a lot of deadwood in our way. Touch off the gun, Joel!" commanded Harry.

One of the men, at this order, fired a light cannon that had been placed in front of the house. But the wind seized, as it were, upon the sound, and carried it off overland. It was impossible that it could reach, with its tidings of vigilance, the despairing crew.

"I fancy we have only stirred up the city folks," remarked one of the men. "Here comes a delegation."

"We can stand them," replied Harry. "That's only old Tom, and Jack Sprat, and some other salt mackerel. They are the kind of timber we want."

"But, there are chaps of a different tune behind them," pointing to a group of four or five well-dressed young men, who were coming down the beach.

"I'll be shot if it ain't my friend!" cried Fred. "The chap that promised to salt and pepper me. Well, he's got more heart than I gave him credit for, if it's a fight he is after."

"A fight at a time like this? I'll be hanged if we don't souse him in the sea, with his fine friends after him, if he mentions it," and Harry's ire was up.

"Leave him to me," suggested Fred, with a wink. "I think I will take the starch out of him."

The imperiled barque had come much nearer during this conversation. Several of her sails had blown into shreds, and it seemed as much as the crew could do to command her. She was setting shoreward with frightful rapidity.

"She is safe from the island," thought Harry. "But she will not clear our bar. It's a chance if she has ten minutes more of life."

The boom of a cannon was again borne by the gale to their ears, answered by the gleam of a rocket from the coast-guard house.

"Is it me you want to see, my friends?" asked Fred, stepping up to the group of young men, who had now arrived. "Or is this only a friendly morning visit?"

"I presume you thought, when you chose to insult me last night, that I would not take the trouble to chastise you this morning," spoke out Wilbur Howard, advancing from the center of the group. "But, low-born cur as you are, I never let any one insult me without repaying them. I never hide myself behind my station."

"Oh! you don't? Well, that is certainly very condescending in you. I ought to be proud to have noble blood like yours to honor me in this way. What is it to be? Swords or pistols?"

A curl of disdain came upon Howard's lips.

"Those are the weapons of gentlemen," he said. "Such as you must be fought with churls' weapons."

"Oh! I see. Fists, you mean?"

"Yes," replied Howard, who was a practiced boxer.

"Well, as you won't take your choice of gentlemen's weapons, you will have to take my choice of churls' weapons. You have given up the right of choice. You must fight now with my weapons, or acknowledge yourself beaten."

"That is so," put in Harry Bains. "And as long as you have come so far to fight, fight you shall, or I'm hanged if we don't duck the crew of you."

Howard looked with a disconcerted eye at the stalwart forms facing him. But he was no coward when it came to a question of fisticuffs, or any ordinary mode of fighting.

"If it's anything reasonable I will not back out," he remarked. "I owe that chap a trouncing, and am not going back till I have administered it."

"It's elegant weather to fight in," declared Fred, as a fresh gale whistled overhead, and the air came by full of driving mist. "Can you handle an oar? Not as a club, but in the rowlocks, I mean."

"I am a member of the Schuylkill navy," was the proud reply.

"Oh! then you are a fine fresh-water sailor!" was Fred's contemptuous reminder. "And you know as much about salt-water rowing as a catfish."

"I am not afraid to handle an oar in fresh or salt water, with the best man that ever floated," Howard boastfully returned.

"All right, my covey!" retorted Fred, with a look that stung his antagonist to the quick. "In ten minutes more that good barque will touch bottom. Then there will be men's lives to save instead of boys' noses to scrape. There will be work for the life-boat, if a life-boat can swim in these waters. That is my challenge. If the life-boat goes out I pull an oar in it, and I challenge you to pull a second. Any man or boy that tries to kick up a fight in a storm like this, and with a shipload of human souls drifting ashore under his eyes, ought to be cartwhipped if he had his due. There is only one way to redeem yourself, and that is by taking an oar in the life-boat. Am I not in the right of it, gentlemen?"

A shout of approval went up from all present.

"By Davy Jones, Fred, you have him there!" cried old Tom, exultingly.

Will Howard's face whitened as he looked upon the raging sea. He glanced back at the resolute faces around him and dared not refuse. One more look at the sea, and he screwed up his courage to the sticking point.

"I accept," he said, but it was with trembling lips.

His voice was drowned in a despairing cry borne in on the gale from the sea. The barque had struck! One of her masts had gone by the board, and the wind was whistling through her shredded sails, while the climbing seas swept her helpless bulk from stem to stern.

CHAPTER VIII.

WRECKED ON THE BAR.

THE point at which the vessel had struck was scarcely a quarter of a mile below the life-station—or coast-guard house, as it was usually termed. She had beached on a sandy bar, about two or three hundred yards beyond low-water mark, and was now grinding deeper and deeper into the sands at every plunge of the waves.

Her sails, torn into ribbons, cracked like whiplashes in the fierce wind. Her masts creaked and strained, as if they would leap from their sockets. The foremast had already gone by the board, and was thumping the side of the vessel with thundering blows, being held fast by its unparted cordage. The coming waves mounted the bulwarks of the

careening wreck, and poured in flooding torrents over her decks, sweeping more than one unhappy soul overboard in their fierce assault.

Some few of the crew could be seen busy with axes, cutting loose the fallen mast. But the most of them were clinging desperately to the rigging, and looking beseechingly ashore, where they could plainly see the efforts making for their rescue.

A wreck at this time of the year was almost an unprecedented spectacle on that shore. The coast guard were only on duty from November to May. But, fortunately, on this occasion they were present, being engaged in another duty, but ready and eager to employ their experience in the service of humanity. The apparatus of the life-service was in good condition, and ready for immediate use.

By this time nearly all the inmates of the city had assembled on the beach, facing the fierce storm, and, in their eagerness to do something toward the rescue of the unfortunate crew, simply annoying and checking the efforts of Harry Bains and his men.

"I wish the water would only come ashore in bucketfuls instead of in handfuls," he growled, as he looked on the excited throng. "We water-dogs could stand it, and it might drown out all these fair-weather flies. How in the blazes is a man going to do anything, with such roses as these in his button-hole? How is it, Joe; is there any ammunition for the mortar?"

"Not a round," replied the thin-featured man addressed. "That's the generous way the Government serves us."

"Here's a sheaf of rockets," cried Fred. "Shall I take them down the beach?"

"Yes, yes! And stir up there, boys, with the life-car. She may go to pieces before we get a line aboard."

The men hastened to obey orders, getting out the life-car, which resembled a small covered boat, with air-hoses in the top, and a ring at each end, to which a hawser might be attached to draw the boat through the surf.

The object now to be achieved was to send out a small line by means of a mortar-shot, or a rocket. A stronger line being drawn out by this was to be attached to a mast of the vessel, and on shore, its purpose being to act as an aid in drawing the life-car forward and back, in a perilous journey for the living souls who now tremblingly awaited the seemingly slow efforts at rescue.

"It is confounded awkward that we can't use the mortar," grumbled Harry Bains. "A rocket is a slim trust in a gale like this. Are you ready, Fred?"

"Ay, ay!" answered the boy, cheerily.

"Let her fly then!"

The rocket was touched off, and flew seaward, hissing and gleaming. Behind it trailed a long, thin line from a coil that lay on the beach.

All eyes watched its course with eager interest. With what eager interest it was watched by the poor souls aboard the barque words cannot express.

"It will fetch them!" cried the boy, excitedly.

"No, no!" returned Harry, shaking his head. "The wind is setting it south. There it goes, twenty yards clear of the bow."

A sound of disappointed expectancy arose from the crowd of observers as the line was rapidly drawn back and recoiled.

"Give her a little more northing this time," directed Harry.

Fred obeyed, but his shot proved as unlucky as before, the wind lulling so that the hissing missile struck clear of the vessel to the north.

"Just as I always said about rockets in a gale of wind," ejaculated Harry. "You can't trust them any more than a straw hat. How many have you left?"

"Half a dozen," replied Fred.

"Let me try my hand. See if I have any better luck."

Away whizzed the rocket again, but with worse instead of better luck than before, falling at least a hundred yards south of the wreck.

"Hang it all, why couldn't that blast hang back for a second?" exclaimed Harry. "If the confounded wind would only blow steady we might count on something. But you might as well trust a woman's temper as these flaws and jibes."

Rocket after rocket was shot, with no better success, Harry Bains growing decidedly out of spirits, as he called the weather all the hard names in the dictionary.

"I always said that rockets were boys' playthings, and not fit for work like this," he angrily exclaimed, on seeing that but a single one remained. "And there's that mortar, which might be of some use with anything to put in it, not worth its weight in old iron. Say, old Tom, you've got a good storm eye, a pose you aim the last rocket."

"There's no surety of hitting the ship at that distance," said Tom, measuring it with his eye. "I'll try it, but it's only chance. If you kin put a spell on the wind now and hold it level for a short two minutes. It's mighty hard to allow for squalls."

He stepped out and commenced to adjust the rocket, with his eye on the wreck, and his hand extended to gauge the strength of the wind.

It was a striking scene at that moment. The sun was now some distance above the horizon, and was flooding the sea with its beams, lighting up a heaving turmoil of waters, flecked everywhere with white foam. Near shore it was simply appalling. Great billows, racing shoreward with frightful speed, struck upon the boundary sands and tossed their crests twenty feet in the air, as they broke in thunder upon the beach. The swishing waters dashed far up beyond their ordinary level, forcing observers back upon the sand-hills to the rear.

The air was full of moisture, reft by the fierce winds from the apex of the waves, and threatening to wet to the skin the long line of eager and anxious spectators, who had forgotten all ulterior consequences in the strain of human sympathy. Not only strong men but delicate women stood there, their hearts throbbing with an anxiety and a sense of terror that drove all less potent thoughts from their minds.

At one spot a dense group was gathered, watching the operations of the surf-men with an earnestness as if their own souls went out upon every rocket; and a disappointment only less than that of the imperiled crew at every failure.

And, to complete the picture, just beyond the surf line lay the wrecked craft, so near land that it seemed as if a strong hand could have thrown a biscuit ashore. Her bow had plowed so deeply into the sands that it was almost buried, while the stern stuck up into the air, the keel nearly visible.

This offered a partial shelter for the men, the decks not being swept as previously, though the hull groaned under the blow of every billow as if the craft was about to part amidships.

They could be seen, clustered in the rigging or under the bulwarks, a group of shivering souls, the weary, almost hopeless waiting for rescue being a terrible strain on the courage of any human being. It is so much easier to be brave when striving for safety than when waiting with idle hands for the blow of irreversible disaster.

"Sighted, Tom?" asked Harry Bains, cheerily.

"Ay, ay!" growled the old salt. "Let her fly, lad."

Fred touched his torch to the last rocket. An instant it fizzed—then with a hiss of streaming fire it shot straight outward, aimed at a point slightly north of the barque's position. All eyes watched it with intense eagerness. Slowly, slowly it curved under the force of the wind. It was bending directly upon the vessel—it would strike her deck!—in a minute more its long line of unfolding rope would be aboard the wreck! A shout of exultation went up, that was echoed from the deck of the barque. And at this very instant of seeming assurance a gust of wind came with a whirl and a whistle around the stern of the wreck, took the flying rocket in its strong clutch, and sent it whizzing past the submerged bow, not three feet distant.

But that three feet might as well have been three miles, so far as the question of success or failure was concerned.

With an oath Harry Bains flung the bight of rope he held upon the sand, and turned away with a face full of vexed disappointment.

Fred emulated him by tossing his torch upon the sand.

"The rocket business is played out," he ejaculated. "There is nothing left but the life-boat."

"And that wouldn't live while you could turn your hand, in them breakers," remarked old Tom.

Meanwhile Harry Bains had advanced upon the sands, speaking-trumpet in hand, as far as he dared.

"Aho, the barque!" he shouted, during one of the momentary lulls of the tempest.

It was next to impossible that his voice could carry against the wind to that distance; but the blast brought back a loud "Aho!"

"We are played out. Can you not try and send something ashore, with a rope?"

"Can't make you out," came back.

"I was afeared the wind would eat up my words. We shall have to signal them. Get out the flags, Joe. Have you got the signal book?"

"Here it is," answered Joe, passing out a thin book from a box he opened.

As Harry quickly turned its leaves, Joe produced a number of small flags, of different colors, from the box.

After a few minutes' search through the book, Harry turned and gave Joe directions, which were followed by the display of several different colored flags, in a definite pattern.

"What is the signal?" asked old Tom.

"I am asking them to try and send a rope ashore."

A cry now came from the vessel.

"Our boats are all stove or carried away. Will try our luck with the fore-top."

The mast which had gone by the board at the first striking of the vessel, was still beating her sides, held fast by its shrouds. But it had just broken in two, leaving the top-mast floating free. To this a rope was dexterously fastened, and paid out as the mast floated off into the surge.

For a moment it looked as if it would come ashore. It rode inward on the crest of a huge billow, which broke and dashed its waters far up the beach. Harry Bains stood ready with a long boat-hook, in the forlorn hope that he might be able to grasp the floating mass. But the undertow dragged it resistlessly out again when within three feet of his reach.

And thus, for the next ten minutes, it floated back and forth, now seeming as if it would dash ashore, now as if it would be carried out to sea, while every eye and every heart was riveted upon it with intense interest.

"It won't fetch it; but that's no more than I expected," exclaimed old Tom. "Hallo! the line's parted, and the spar's floating by itself."

The line was drawn in by the crew of the barque, on whom the failure of their effort must have had a most depressing influence.

"What are they up to now?" cried Harry Bains, sharply. "By Heaven! they are sending a man ashore with the rope!"

As he spoke, an alert form, bound round with what seemed to be a life-preserver, was seen to leap from the side of the barque into the seething waves.

"It's despr't!" said old Tom, shaking his head,

doubtfully. "I don't b'lieve no man's muscles kin buffet them waves."

Yet the man seemed to swim strongly and lightly. In, in, he came. He was in the inner line of the surf. He flung himself flat on the beach as the wave left him, with his hands clutching the shifting sands.

But the strong undertow dragged him resistlessly back, and flung him into the tossing sea again.

Again and again it seemed as if he would make the shore. Again and again he was dragged away by the resistless undertow.

In despair, his strength nearly gone, he signaled with the line to be drawn on board again. Poor fellow! he was never to reach that deck alive! For the floating mast, with which they had previously sought to send a line ashore, was hurled by a strong wave with deadly force against his swimming form.

The rope was drawn in, but it had a corpse at its extremity.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CREW OF THE LIFE BOAT.

A DEEP hush fell upon all present—the solemn hush of awe. Death had seized a victim before their eyes. Were they not destined to see the whole ship's crew perish helplessly before them?

The hush was first broken by old Tom, who feelingly exclaimed:

"Poor tar, he has got in the maw of that eternal sea, that lives on human flesh and blood. It's a bad show, lads. I'm despr't afeared he's goin' to have company."

"I hardly see the next move on the board," said Harry Bains, dubiously. "The life-boat—"

"It won't live," interrupted Joe, the thin-faced man. "It would be squelched in two strokes of the oars."

"I doubt that," remarked Fred, modestly. "The wind has sunk some in the last half-hour, and I don't think the breakers are quite as wild as they were. I'll venture to hold her head to the waves, if there's any of you ready to take the oars."

"There ain't your match at the tiller on the Jersey coast," cried old Tom, approvingly. "But it's too risky, I'm afeared."

"And who wouldn't risk when there's lives to save?" exclaimed Fred. "What say you, Harry, shall we launch the life boat?"

"By thunder, yes!" ejaculated Harry. "It's life for life, and the man that hangs back now is a coward. Get her out, lads, and bring her here opposite the wreck. We'll make a break for it; and if the sea gobbles us up we'll die in harness, that's all."

The lulling excitement of the spectators was stirred up to fever-heat again, as they saw the broad-beamed metallic boat slowly haled along the sands, an eager throng of helpers lending their aid to the work.

"But we are short-handed," exclaimed Harry Bains. "Two of our men are off duty; and there's Tim McDermott who has just managed to sprain his arm. We're half a crew short, and I doubt if we'll find three men, fit for the work, to take their lives in their hands at this labor."

"I kin pull an oar with any man in the Jerseys," cried old Tom. "And I don't hold my life with a sneeze when it's a case like this!"

"And I'm your partner!" another voice responded, and the stalwart form of Jack Sprat, the old waterman, stepped forward. "I've had to row for my own life afore now; and I'm ready to row for them poor devils."

"Bravo!" cried Harry. "I couldn't ask for two better oarsmen. Bet a mackerel we fetch the wreck yet. But there's an ear short still. Who's to take it?"

"I've got the man," said Fred, quietly. "The fellow that's so full of fight. If he hasn't backed water at sight of the life boat, he's got to stick to his challenge."

"No, no, Fred," replied Harry. "It's no baby's play now. The fellow would be catching crabs every second stroke. He'd capsize us sure. We want no land-lubbers."

"If he belongs to the Schuylkill navy he knows the merits of an oar," returned Fred. "He can swim, for we've all seen him, so he has as good a chance as any of us if there's an upset. And as for heart, a coward is sometimes the hardest fighter, when he's cornered."

"That's all nonsense, boy."

"No it ain't," Fred stoutly answered. "He's bound to row, or back down. I see him yonder now. He's got to show the white feather like a cowardly cur, or take an oar like a man. And if he backs water, I'll make him the laugh of Beach City."

He walked quickly away toward a group of spectators, composed of Mr. Darlington and his daughter with several of their friends. Will Howard was standing beside Rose, chatting with a lightness of tone which hardly seemed to please her, for her face wore a very grave expression. He did not notice Fred's approach until the latter spoke to him.

"Now, my friend," said the young boatman, in a steady, determined tone. "The hour has come. We are about to launch the life boat."

"And what is that to me?" exclaimed Howard, turning fiercely toward the speaker.

"Only that there's an oarsman short. There is a fine opening for the gentleman who is no more afraid of salt than he is of fresh water."

"What does this mean, Fred?" asked Mr. Darlington, in surprise.

"Shall I tell him?" queried our hero, turning to Howard.

"No, no!" exclaimed Howard. "It is nothing, Mr. Darlington. Only a bit of chaffing."

"If you back down now," said Fred, sternly, in his ear, "I'll post you as a confessed coward over

all Beach City. Yes or no, at once. There is no time to waste."

"I am not dressed for rowing," returned Howard, his face paling, while he switched his boot nervously with his cane.

"Find you an outfit. Is it yes or no? You can take your choice. If you want to be shown up as a blustering coward I'm your man."

A fierce change came into Howard's face.

"I never backed down yet, for man or beast," he cried. "I'll row, if you dare keep me company."

"What is all this whispered conference?" asked Mr. Darlington, stepping up.

His daughter looked on with a pale face. She had caught some of the words of the speakers.

"It only means that we are a hand short in the life boat, and that this gentleman has volunteered to pull an oar," Fred explained.

"What madness is this, Will?"

"There is no madness about it," said Will, with a pale face, but in an energetic tone. "They want an oarsman, and I don't go back of any man in handling an oar."

"But this is tomfoolery. Your life can't be risked in that manner. It is too valuable to be thrown away."

"That's the notion we've all got," remarked Fred, resolutely. "There's half a dozen valuable lives to be risked. This man can swim as well as I can, for I've seen him at it." His lip curled scornfully as he alluded to Howard's feat of the previous day. "He will have an equal chance with me, and what more has he a right to?"

"But he is a gentleman! A wealthy—"

"So am I a gentleman," returned Fred, curtly. "And as for wealth—it's not money against money now, but man against man. Are you coming, sir? The boat is ready to launch."

There was a covert threat in his words that cut Howard to the quick. He turned toward his friends. Rose was looking beseechingly in his face, too much agitated to speak. He dared not risk the tale that would be set afloat; that he had insulted a stranger in a tipsy brawl, that he had accepted a challenge, and had then feared to meet his antagonist halfway. He would not have Rose Darlington know this for the world.

There are men whose mental cowardice is stronger than their physical. He turned again to Fred, saying, haughtily:

"Lead on. Wherever you dare go I dare follow."

There was more than bravado in this. Will Howard was not without a sort of courage, though it might be the bravery of the cornered dog, and he saw a chance of making capital among his friends as a man of mettle, if he should come successfully through this exploit. "They would hardly venture out if they thought there was great risk," he said to himself.

"But, father!" cried Rose, earnestly, as the two young men walked away together, "this is a terrible risk! They will be drowned! Will you not stop them?"

"I dare not, Rose. It would never do to obstruct the movement of the life boat. And Will Howard did not trouble himself much when he left you to be drowned."

"But that was—"

"The act of a coward, Rose. Say no more about it."

Rose became deathly pale as she saw the group gathered about the boat, which now stood, ready for launching, on the beach opposite the wreck. She could hardly recognize Will Howard's form among the crew, he was so changed by the rough waterproof dress which Fred had found for him.

In fact her eyes seemed to fix themselves more closely on the tall slender form by his side. Had he not saved her life yesterday? Could she avoid dreading his peril to-day?

"Come, Fred, I'm afraid of your fresh-water sailor," said Harry Bains, with a glance of disdain at the fair-faced, mustached landsman. "Better let him slide. I have a volunteer here who has smelt salt water."

"All right," returned Fred. "He can back down if he will."

But there was that in his tone which Will Howard hardly liked. He felt, moreover, that he had gone too far now to recede. His heart trembled within him as he looked upon the tumbling surf, but he answered haughtily enough:

"If the life boat goes out, I go out with it. There is no back down in the Howard blood."

Harry Bains looked at him with an instinctive admiration.

"There is something in blood, after all," he muttered. "The fellow will pull through all right."

Yet it was a desperate enterprise that lay before this devoted crew. The wind had lulled slightly, and the roar of the breakers had lost some of its terror, yet every heart ceased for a moment its pulsations as they saw the boat forced headlong into the wild waters, and beheld the oars rise and fall like clock-work in the foaming breakers.

The light craft was hurled like a feather on the top of vast breakers. It sunk as if to the bottomless pit in the boiling din of the waters. Now it seemed utterly lost. Now it rose again on a new billow. And the fierce waves dashed over it as if bent on utterly destroying the daring boat which had thus boldly invaded their domain.

But still the oars rose and fell like clock-work. Still the erect form of the youthful coxswain rose through the flying foam, keeping the boat unchangeably head on to the waves.

With suspended breath the spectators watched this slow and perilous passage, fearing every minute to see the crew hurled into the drenching brine. But from the vessel came cries of joyful encouragement

to the brave boatmen imperiling their lives for them.

Fred did not lose sight of the face of Will Howard, in his vigilant duty of meeting the successive billows prow on, and giving the sea no vantage ground in its conflict with his staunch craft.

He saw the face of the amateur life-boatman grow paler and paler, as he realized the fearful danger, which he had not before fully understood. He set his lip tremble, though he still manfully kept time with the oars of his harder comrades.

"Who cares if old ocean is emptying her wash-tub?" cried Fred, cheerily. "We've all been through a worse boll than this, and not flinched an inch. Stick to it, my hearty; if you catch a crab now you'll be responsible for seven funerals. But I've got a better opinion of you. I saw that there was the blood of a man in you, or you should never have stepped over our gunwale."

This cheering address restored to Will Howard some of the courage he was fast losing. He set his lips firmly, and grasped the oar with renewed energy.

"I will show you what a gentleman can do when he is put to it," he exclaimed, with a nervous energy.

And I'd sooner prove you a man any day than prove you a coward," returned Fred. "There's cowards to spare in the world, but no waste stock of men."

During this brief colloquy the life boat continued its perilous passage. It was now in the very roar and rage of the breakers. One false stroke, one quiver of the helm, and it would be all up with the daring oarsmen. The waves raged above and around them like rampant tigers, watching for the least weakness of their adversary to rend him into fragments.

But still the life boat resolutely faced them, cutting through or riding over their white crests, still the oars rose and fell, forcing the boat forward through the turmoil of the waves. Though at times it seemed buried in the breakers, yet it always rose again—inches by inch, foot by foot, forcing its way out through the angry sea.

And Will Howard thoroughly justified his boasted mastery of the oar, for not a man of the crew rowed with a steadier and more vigorous stroke. The blood of the young man was fully roused. It was do or die between him and the sea. And he would die rather than show the white feather to that scornfully-smiling figure at the helm.

And now a shout went up from the shore which was audible to the oarsmen even against the fury of the storm, and which was echoed from the deck of the wrecked vessel. For the life boat had passed the line of the breakers, and had reached the stiller waters on the lee of the wreck.

An involuntary cheer went up from her crew, as they felt her yielding like a mettled steed to their oars, and as the waves ceased to pour in fierce torrents over her staunch sides.

"Hurra, boys! We've won the belt!" cried Fred, in irrepressible excitement. "One—two—three—and we are there!"

The boat surged up under the lee of the wreck, in waters almost unaffected by the outer turmoil. In a moment she was made fast, and in a moment more her crew were on the careening deck, bearing a line from the shore.

"By all that's good, you're a man—sound and solid!" cried Fred, seizing the hand of his late antagonist. "I knew it was in you! You can tread on me now, if you want, and I won't kick."

Howard smiled proudly, as he returned Fred's grasp.

CHAPTER X.

THE LIFE-CAR SERVICE.

It was no easy footing on the deck of the stranded barque. She lay at an oblique angle to the line of the beach, her head forced so deeply into the sand of the bar that the bow was quite under water, while the stern was lifted almost clear of the waves. This brought her deck to a steep slope that rendered footing very precarious on the drenched and slippery planks. The crew had gathered near the stern, where they were sheltered from the fury of the gale, the waters rushing in sweltering torrents over the forward portion of the vessel, but only the flying spray reaching their post of vantage.

But there was another danger, evidenced by the groaning of the barque as every successive wave struck her exposed stern. With each billow she slightly lifted, her bow settling more firmly in the sands. As the waters rolled under and away she sunk again into the trough of the sea. But the fixed prow resisted this movement, and the whole weight of the after part of the barque bore upon the midship line, which threatened soon to part under this unceasing and violent leverage.

As the life boatmen sprang on deck they were greeted with a cheer from the lately-desponding crew.

"Take hold, for your lives!" cried the captain. "It's slippery footing aboard the poor Triton, and the chap that slips into that devil's yeast below there is a dead goose."

Harry Bains sprang toward him, and grasped his extended hand, clinging to the same rope by which the captain sustained his footing.

"Keep a stiff upper lip, captain," he exclaimed. "We will fetch you all safe ashore; and if your ship's gone, there's more in port waiting for a sound commander and a ready crew. How many men have you?"

"There are fifteen of us left, counting some passengers," replied the captain, a stout, red-faced,

muscular-looking man. "The sea has nabbed two or three. You saw poor Gill Bowline go under—as good a seaman as ever furled topsail."

"Pull out the life-car, lads," sung out Harry, cheerily. "There's no time to lose. With a will now, boys. Where do you hall from, Cap?"

"From Havre, touching last from Liverpool. This is the barque Triton, in the French and New York trade."

"And what is your cargo?"

"We have some dry-goods, leathers, and fancy stuffs. But the bulk of our cargo is English iron."

"I thought you had a heavy strain abaft," Harry gravely replied. "The Triton won't stand it long."

"No," said the captain, shaking his head dubiously. "I am sadly afraid she'll part."

"Cheerily there, men! Cheerily ho!" yelled Harry. "Rip her out, boys! Rip her out! We have no time to play now."

Under their strong arms the life-car shot rapidly through the breakers. The ship's crew assisted in the duty, bracing themselves against mast and shroud, and at every point that afforded firm footing. In a few minutes it was pulled in over the deck.

"Send your passengers ashore first, Cap," cried Harry. "A vast there, you lubbers, or I'll be shot if I don't split your heads!" he ejaculated, as several of the seamen were about to install themselves in the car.

"We'll have no shirking, here; and the man that don't obey orders—hang me if we won't leave him to play ship-master by himself. Trot out your passengers, Cap."

The captain designated two gentlemen, who clung to the after-rail, a middle-aged and a young man, their faces blanched almost to the whiteness of the foam that swept by them.

Fred looked into their pallid visages with a rising contempt, as he lent the elder man his hand to assist him to the life-car. He could not comprehend a fear so abject as that which seemed to affect them.

"The car will hold another," he remarked, after the two passengers had been deposited within it. "Who shall it be?"

Several men started forward, but the captain sternly ordered them back, enforcing his orders by grasping a marlinespike in his vigorous right hand.

"You take the place, Jack Bunce," he called out. "Every cur that shows the white feather shall wait till the last, and if a man among you mutinies, shoot me if I won't knock him into the breakers."

The men drew back on hearing this fierce, determined threat. They knew better than to disobey their captain when his blood was up.

"Send some one else, sir," said Bunce, a tall, handsome seaman. "Jack Bunce was never yet the first to fly his craft."

"Now, none of your rascally airs, Jack. Orders must be obeyed, and it's every seaman's duty to obey them."

Without another word Jack walked forward and placed himself in the car, though his face showed great dissatisfaction with the performance.

The close cover of the car was shut and fastened on the three men stretched lengthwise within its narrow limits. Their only air came through several holes pierced through this cover, which were provided with raised borders to prevent the water from entering.

A signal being now given to the shore, the car was launched overboard and drawn rapidly through the surf, dozens of hands grasping the shore rope, while its progress was steadied by a gradual paying out of line from the wreck.

Through the fierce surf it went; now buried out of sight; now jerked clear of the water. A shout of exultation arose as it passed the danger-line and was hauled rapidly up upon the sands.

Again and again the car was hauled to the wreck, and left it with its freight of living souls. Again and again it came safely to land, though not always with equal success. For more than once the waters penetrated to its interior, and half-suffocated the inmates. And once it overturned in the surf, filling instantly with water. With the greatest possible rapidity it was haled ashore, the cover loosened and the water emptied.

But its three inmates were, to all appearance, drowned. They had been for several minutes immersed in the deadly brine. Efforts were at once made to resuscitate them, while the life-car was again sent out to the wreck.

The number of persons on deck were now reduced to the captain and mate, two seamen, and the crew of the life boat. Of these all had been busily engaged in the duty of handling the sea-line of the car, except Fred, who was occupied in signaling the shore under direction of the captain.

Willbur Howard alone was idle, standing by the after shrouds, where he had stationed himself on first coming aboard, and to which he clung with a nervous gripe. His face was pale and his lip trembling, though he strove to hide these evidences of dread under a haughty expression. He would not have acknowledged it for the world, but he had had quite enough of life-boat service in his outer trip, and could not help but fear that raging sea, which roared and tumbled in such foaming terror past.

"She is lifting more and more astern, Cap," said Harry Bains. "It was almost a death-groan she gave after that last raise. We must make time or the hulk will part under our feet."

The life-car had just come aboard and been opened. Simultaneously another immense wave rolled in, lifting the bark on its lofty brow. It rolled away inward, and in its place yawned a vast gulf, the whole after part of the vessel seeming to stand, for a moment, free from her watery bed.

She settled downward with an alarming creak, a

wide crack opening in the planks of the strained deck.

It was too much for Will Howard's overtaxed nerves. With a cry of alarm he darted hastily forward to the life-car, and sprang into it in advance of the two seamen, whom the captain had just ordered to take their places within its open cavity.

It was with almost a "view halloo!" that Harry Bains witnessed this movement.

"Took water, by Jove!" he ejaculated. "You've plunked him, Fred. He asks quarter."

"I thought he would hang out," replied Fred, contemptuously. "The fellow hasn't the backbone I gave him credit for."

"That's all very clever, my good friends," exclaimed the captain. "The chap pulled a lusty oar out through the breakers, and there's not one landsman in five thousand would have faced them out without facing them back. Let him go, and good luck go with him."

Will Howard heard this conversation, and was quite satisfied to take the captain's view of the case. He was, for the time being, thoroughly cowed by the terrors of the sea.

"Once more now, lads! Ashore with her!" Harry called out. "Give them the signal, Fred."

Fred signaled with his flag to the shore, and again the life-car shot swiftly through the breakers, the forms of women as well as of men being visible among those who pulled upon the shore-line.

This time it reached the beach in complete safety, and its inmates could be seen from the deck of the Triton stepping from its close confines.

"So much for the life-car," cried Harry Bains. "It has done its duty nobly. But your barque won't live, Cap, for another trip. And there's just a good life-boat's crew of us left. It's good-by, then, to the Triton, peace to her old timbers; and it's man the life-boat. Tumble in, lads, tumble in. There's no time now for nail-biting."

They all seemed to think with him, for it was evident that the wreck might part at any moment.

The boat, which had been hauled to the deck of the Triton, was hastily lowered into the eddying but comparatively quiet waters under her lee. The oarsmen, with little regard to precedence, sprang aboard, each seizing his oars.

"Now, Cap, in with you! And you, mate!" cried Harry, swinging himself, as he spoke, over the side. "Hallo, Fred! Where are you? I thought you were safe aboard."

"One second," exclaimed the captain. "I have forgotten my log-book."

"In with you, Cap," cried Fred, who was standing by the companionway. "Where is it? I will get it."

"On the shelf, in the left-hand state-room."

With a bound Fred leaped into the cabin, and hurried to the point indicated. He was hardly two seconds gone, but when he returned there was not a soul on the Triton's deck. The life boat was manned, and waited only for its youthful coxswain.

"Here's the log," exclaimed Fred, appearing at the bulwarks. "Stand by to catch it."

The mate of the Triton, a hard-faced, brawny, ill-favored man, lifted his hand to catch the book which Fred flung into the boat.

The lad caught a glimpse of the hand and fell back in momentary amazement. It was a short, sinewy, dark hand, with reddish spots. On one finger was a heavy gold ring, set with what appeared to be an emerald.

He knew it at a glance, as if it had been a face instead of a hand. It was the hand of the smuggler, which he had seen from beneath the door while lying bound in the smugglers' den!

"Ahoy, there!" screamed old Tom, in short, quick notes. "What in the blazes keeps you? Here comes a screeching wave."

It was on them, in fact, ere Fred could move, a vast, mountainous billow. In a moment it rolled under the vessel, lifting her higher than ever, and giving the life boat such a surge that it tore loose and was hurled far away from her side.

It was, for them, a fortunate accident, for otherwise they would inevitably have been sucked under the wreck. And as luckily their oars were ready for use, and fell with a simultaneous thud into the water, holding the boat head on to the beach.

But the Triton sunk into the trough of the sea with a heavier surge than ever. There was a dismal groan—a rending—a splintering of timbers—in the next instant, with a loud crash, the good barque parted in twain, the stern sliding into the seething waves, while a flood of hungry waters poured into, and roared and eddied through, her rent and exposed interior.

On the quarter-deck appeared the tall, erect, unflinching form of Fred Halyard, going down with the ruined ship into the boiling waste of waters.

CHAPTER XI.

RETURN OF THE LIFE BOAT.

As may well be imagined the observers on shore had been in a state of intense excitement during the occurrence of the events just related.

It had taken the form, with some, of active exercise, they lending their utmost aid to the humane labor of pulling ashore the life car, with its living freight.

And as the imperiled crew gradually reached the shore, and stood erect and safe on the solid sands, the excitement and enthusiasm knew no bounds. With that primary impulse of charity which imagines that a solid meal is a panacea for all mortal ills, and that every poor soul must necessarily be starving, they were at once taken charge of, treated to dry clothes and a good dinner, and finished off with a taste of that liquid comfort which sailors are proverbial for not refusing.

But the poor souls who had been overturned in the

surf needed other treatment. Fortunately there were some persons present who had an idea of the proper method to resuscitate the apparently drowned. They were taken to the coast-guard house, and every effort made to bring them to. After half an hour of hard labor these efforts proved successful in the case of two of the sailors. But the third was beyond recovery, all attempts to resuscitate him proving in vain.

Meanwhile the others were being gradually drawn in, and released from their close imprisonment in the narrow car, to the free air and firm footing of the breaker-beaten sands.

Our friends, Mr. Darlington and his daughter Rose, were among the most interested of all the spectators of this exciting scene. The fact of Wilbur Howard being one of the life boat crew, and the interest which Rose involuntarily felt toward Fred Halyard, gave them a personal sentiment toward these men so bravely periling their lives in the service of human ty.

Rose particularly watched the outward passage of the boat with a vital interest as if her own soul was sharing the terrible danger to which these devoted men were exposed. Her heart seemed to beat in unison with the rise and fall of the oars, and when, at length, she saw them nimbly climbing the sides of the wreck, it appeared as if a terrible weight had been lifted from her life.

Mr. Darlington grew more and more uneasy and excited as the car went out and was seen to be drawn on the deck of the vessel.

"I can't stand it, Rose!" he ejaculated. "I have got to have a pull on that rope. Those young fry shall not have all the glory. Take care of my cane."

He drove his gold-headed cane forcibly into the sand, and ran to the rope, grasping it with as vigorous a gripe as the most athletic of the long line of young men that held it.

"Now! Heave ho! Hand over hand!" was sung out; and the car came through the waves with admirable speed.

In a few minutes it lay high and dry on the sands, and hundreds crowded around it as the cover was thrown back, and its prisoners released to the open air.

Mr. Darlington, from his position on the rope, stood in the inner circle of this throng, and looked with a warm interest for the emergence of the sailors it was supposed to contain.

The first to appear was the tall, handsome sailor, Jack Bunce, who sprang upon the sands with an alert leap, which brought an involuntary shout of admiration from the lookers-on. He seemed the beau-ideal of a sailor as he stood there as if on parade, with the loosely-knotted handkerchief about his neck, and his trim seaman's rig.

He was followed more slowly by the two other occupants of the car—the passengers of the Triton.

The first was a young, slender, delicate man, by no means good-looking, though tastefully dressed. The second to appear seemed his father. He was a man of some forty-five or fifty years of age, with grizzled whiskers, and a pallid, bloodless face. His features were but an older copy of those of the youth.

Mr. Darlington had been looking eagerly, from the inner line of the crowd, and was face to face with the older man as he emerged. One look into his face, and an involuntary, but quickly repressed cry came from the lips of the excited observer.

The rescued passenger raised his lusterless eyes, and fixed them for a moment on the face of the man who had given vent to this strange cry. He then turned them away with no sign of recognition. The next instant he was taken possession of by the throng, whose excitement vented itself in an eager handshaking of the three rescued men.

"You have worked too hard, father," said Rose, looking anxiously into his face as he rejoined her. "You are quite pale. You must leave such work for younger men."

"It is not that, Rose," he quietly replied, with a slight tremble in his tone. "I have seen a ghost."

"A ghost!" she repeated, with parted lips.

"Yes. A ghost of the past. Yonder older passenger. I thought him dead years ago. Who would have believed that he could have risen from the sea to haunt me? But he did not seem to recognize me."

These last words were given in a low, muttering tone. Evidently he hoped that he had escaped recognition.

Rose looked in her father's agitated face with a strange feeling. She had never seen him so wrought upon before. She dared not ask further questions. It was for him to reveal the mystery hidden in his words if he would—not for her to ask for it.

But he seemed inclined to say no more, but stood silent and moody by her side, tracing figures with his cane in the sand, as the car again and again came in with its burdens of the rescued.

As it made its last trip Wilbur Howard sprang from it, his tall form dilated, his handsome face flushed with pride, or, as some might have thought, with importance.

"Oh, yes! It was a rather rough row," he drawled, indifferently to the congratulations of some of his friends. "We don't have such work on the Schuyll-kill. I wouldn't care to take such pleasure-trips for a daily exercise—but, when men's lives are in danger, you know,"—and he flourished his hand, suggestively.

"Bravo, Will!" cried Mr. Darlington, rousing himself from his abstraction, and warmly grasping the young man's hand. "You have done nobly, my boy. You are the hero of the day."

"And has Rose not a word for me?" he asked, in a lower tone.

"Yes, yes," she cried, her sweet face flushed with emotion. "I appreciate your heroic action, indeed

I do. To think of the terrible peril you have been in."

She shuddered as her eyes fell upon the raging seas. Her hand lay quietly in his grasp.

"But why did you not finish your row, and come ashore in the life boat?" asked a young gentleman, who seemed rather envious of Will's exploit.

"Because I did not go out as a coast-guardsmen, for a day's labor," Will haughtily replied. "I merely wished to show those fellows the quality of a gentleman. They thought I would not dare row with them. But they did not know the Howard spirit."

His voice was so haughty and disdainful that Rose involuntarily withdrew her hand from his grasp. She had an instinctive dislike for his demeanor.

"Why do they not draw out the car again?" was asked.

"I fancy the rest will take to the life boat," replied Will. "Yes, there it is manned. And, by Jove, yonder comes a fearful wave!"

A deep hush, followed by a cry of alarm, came upon the throng, as they saw the vessel lifted upon this mighty billow, and at the same instant the life boat torn from her side and dashed away on the fierce sea.

"There is a man on her still!" screamed a shrill voice. "It is the boy! It is Fred Halyard! Hal! she parts! She is going down! And the boy with her!"

There were the cries of women mingled with the alarmed voices of the men. Rose caught one glimpse of that erect figure, and then covered her face with her hands. She dared not look again.

On board the life boat all was horror, both at the peril they had temporarily escaped, and at the deadly danger of the boy. But their oars were in the water. The captain of the Triton had taken the helm. They safely rode the threatening billow, though its waters seemed poured in torrents over their heads.

The after part of the vessel had made one downward plunge into the sea. It rose again on a succeeding wave. But it was tenantless. The form of Fred Halyard had disappeared.

"Give way, boys," cried their new coxswain. "It is all up with the lad. Bite the water with your oars! Let her spin! We will be squelched if we lay here with oars in the air."

It was evident to all that he was right, and the oars fell simultaneously into the waves. But it was mechanical with old Tom, whose weather-beaten face was full of agony as he watched the ravaging waters for some trace of his lost boy.

"There he lifts! There he lifts!" he suddenly yelled. "The boy's alive yet, thank Heaven! And he's swimming like a dolphin!"

They all caught sight of him at the same moment, his head now emerging, now buried under the seas, but swimming as vigorously as if he had been in still waters.

"He may fight for his life, but he will never make it," said the mate, coolly. "No man ever swam ashore through a sea like that."

"Look out there, Fred!" screamed Harry Bains. "There's the spar that killed poor Bowline. Look out that it don't strike you!"

A cheering cry came in response from the struggling lad. The next instant he had grasped the floating top-mast and climbed upon it.

"A cannon-ball don't hit twice in the same place," he yelled. "What kills one man cures another."

He was scarcely twenty yards away from the boat. They had both been borne well in toward the shore. The boat would probably land in safety, but Fred's chance seemed almost hopeless.

Suddenly Old Tom shipped his oar, and rose hastily to his feet.

"The boy must be saved!" he cried, through his set teeth. "Keep to your oars, men. Leave him to me."

"You are not going over?" cried Harry Bains. "Are you mad?"

"No, no; not so mad as that," returned the old sailor. "It wouldn't help Fred to drown myself, or I'd not stop. But flesh and blood ain't made for work like that."

As he spoke he had caught up a light line which lay in the bottom of the boat. It was the line which had been used to pull out the heavier rope for the life-car.

The old tar deftly made a noose in one end, and then rapidly twined a large portion of the remainder into a coil.

"We'll see if old Tom has forgot how to fling a rope," he muttered.

"Look alive there, Fred," he shouted. "Got your eyes open?"

"Ay, ay!" came from the boy, who was still bravely buffeting the waves.

"Stand by, then, for a rope. Ahoy! Here she comes!"

The old man stood for a moment with uplifted arm, seemingly as steady as a rock, though the boat was tossing like a feather in the outer line of the surf. Then, with a half turn of the body, he sent the long rope whistling out into the air, it falling with a thud into the waves as its full length unfolded.

"By Jove, it's as straight as a die!" ejaculated Harry Bains. "The boy's got it! Fred's got it! Hurrah for old Tom!"

"Get the loop under your arms, Fred," shouted the old man. "We will bring you in safe."

The wind was too shrill for the boy to hear him, but he was keen enough to know what to do without telling, and in a minute he had firmly fastened the noosed end of the rope around his body, still clinging to his support as he did so.

"Now, with a will, lads!" cried the captain. "We are in the teeth of the trouble."

The surf was, indeed, terrible at this point, but the life boat was stanch and her crew vigorous and alert. Over, through, under the foaming waves she rode, the oars as steady as if she had been upon a mill-pond.

In, in, in, foot by foot. A last billow lifted her upon its broad bosom. The strong oars cut its white apex. It fell in swashing torrents on the sands, and rolled again to sea.

But the life boat clung to the sands as the undertow ran like a cataract by her sides. In a moment she was high and dry upon the beach. The crew had sprung over and run her up ere another wave had time to strike her.

But old Tom was otherwise occupied. He was pulling in, hand-over-hand, on the rope at whose end Fred still valiantly swam.

Not a sound greeted the incoming of the life boat. But as the boy was dragged hastily through the surf, and sprung to his feet, erect and safe, upon the sands, a shout went up that for the moment seemed to drown the howling of the storm.

CHAPTER XII. A MUSKRAT'S HOLE.

SEVERAL days passed before the excitement calmed down in Beach City. By the time the storm was fairly ended the good ship Triton was rent into fragments and strown for miles along the beach. Only her forward half lay buried in the sands of the bar, and this was little more than a skeleton, all its upper works being torn off by the sea.

Her crew were lionized to their hearts' content. As Jack Bunce said:

"It pays for a ship's crew to be waterlogged on a coast like this. I wouldn't mind being wrecked here every summer, by way of exercise. We don't get such grub and grog often a shipboard; and with every man his own captain. It won't last. It's a good deal too much like going to heaven."

There were other lions besides the ship's crew. Wilbur Howard and Fred Halyard found it no easy matter to escape their throngs of admirers. The fact is that the first-named gentleman did not try very hard. The incense of admiration was by no means disagreeable to him, and he took it in full draughts.

But the fact of the quarrel and challenge between him and Fred Halyard had somehow leaked out, and there were envious persons to declare that he had shown the white feather after all, in not daring to come ashore in the life boat.

The publicity thus given to the challenge was none of Fred Halyard's doings. He was not that kind of boy. In fact he was not at all inclined to be made a lion of. And he had other business on hand which this publicity very much interfered with. The smugglers were yet to be trailed to their den.

"How now, Fred; when are we to make that trip through the inlets?" asked Mr. Proctor, on the second day after the storm. "It is likely they may leave us an empty locker to open."

"I'm afeared Fred's base line is in bad condition, after this storm," replied Harry Bains. "The inlets must have had a scrubbing out."

"You are right there," returned Fred. "I took a boat and rowed up Leather Channel yesterday, but there wasn't one of my mile-posts left."

"Then we are dashed again!" exclaimed Mr. Proctor, bringing his hand with heavy emphasis upon the table.

"I reckon not," Fred dryly responded. "I picked up the bearings as well as I knew how, and rowed ashore. I think I've got it nailed among half a dozen houses. You know where the fishermen's cabins are, Harry—above Swamptown?"

"I should judge so."

"It's one of them, I'll wager a cow. Say the word and see if I don't track the right one. But I've got other fish to fry just now. I have a new base line to triangulate."

"Hallo! How's that?" cried Harry. "Something new in the wind? What rats are you smelling out now, Fred?"

"The rats are all right. It's their holes we want," returned Fred, quietly.

"How is this, boy?" asked Mr. Proctor, impatiently. "What new mystery have you started? What is your new base line?"

"The captain of the Triton is one end of it," said Fred. "And the mate the other. But just where the triangle points is only to be found by trailing these individuals."

"The captain and mate of the Triton!" exclaimed Harry. "What infernal wool-gathering is this, boy? Are you trying some sell on us?" His voice had an angry ring.

"Nary a sell," Fred energetically replied. "As sure as you are standing there the 'Fly-by-Night' went down when the Triton was wrecked. Do you remember that I had seen the hand of one of the men in the smugglers' den? Very well, I saw that same hand again when the mate of the Triton held up his fist to catch the log-book."

"Whew!" Harry whistled, in his surprise. "Is that why you tumbled back as if you had got a shot in the eye? I thought something had hit you."

"It was an unlucky time to take the back track," replied Fred. "It came near making me food for fishes."

"But are you sure of this?" asked Mr. Proctor, with deep interest.

"I know it," Fred confidently responded. "I'd know that hand if I saw it at a mast-head in China. And he's got on the identical ring, with the green stone, that I told you of."

"By Jove, Harry, this is important!" exclaimed Mr. Proctor, rising and pacing the floor excitedly. "These men must be watched and followed. Who

knows but we have the inside ring of the smuggling that has been going on for years along this coast?"

"It might be," replied Harry. "Fred has smelt a rat, in good earnest."

"I will see them and try to make out their plans this afternoon," said Mr. Proctor. "Of course they do not dream of being suspected, and may talk freely. If we can shadow them and make out their hiding-places it will be a royal business."

"Had not Fred and I best take a walk up by those fishermen's huts this afternoon? We may make out something."

"Certainly. Certainly. But keep your weather-eye open. Don't sell our game. These chaps are as keen as steel."

"I don't think they will circumvent us," Harry replied, as he took his hat to leave the room. "Come, boy, we'll have a bit of dinner and a long walk."

"I should not fear for you, Fred," said Mr. Proctor, shaking hands with him on leaving. "You have proved that you know when to open your eyes and when to shut them."

"I don't reckon that this set of smuggling hounds can shut them for me very easy," returned Fred, with a light laugh, as he left the room.

At four o'clock that afternoon Harry Bains and Fred, accompanied by old Tom Halyard, who had volunteered to join them, were walking along the low foot of the ridge, which separated the mainland from the swampy region.

Just before them was the group of fishermen's huts referred to, extending for half a mile along the inlet, which here ran in almost a straight line, bordered by the sloping shore of the mainland.

Most of these were small, one-storied cabins, built at the edge of the water, with the boats of the occupants floating in the stream, but fastened to spikes in the rear of the houses. They were usually raised on an elevated foundation, to avoid any undue rise of the waters, and were situated about one hundred yards apart.

"The water ran into your den, Fred," remarked Harry. "I don't see any such arrangement as that here."

"And no underground rigger, such as the boy talked 'bout," said old Tom.

"They're no fools," retorted Fred. "I don't suppose they hang out their flag at the mast-head. But I wasn't dreaming for all that. It is all here somewhere, cutely covered up."

They were now near the largest cabin they had yet seen, since it boasted a second story. The ground on which it stood had been raised for several feet above the general level, while its side was so close to the bank of the inlet as almost to overhang it.

Harry looked curiously at it. There was no sign of the water entering into any underground apartment.

"There's the owner now, mending his net over by the shed," remarked Fred. "Get him in talk. I want to take a private scout around these diggings."

The boy seated himself carelessly on a bank as if to rest, and began to amuse himself by snapping the light sticks that lay near him. Harry looked back after a few steps were taken, and found that Fred had almost disappeared, being stretched at full length in the long grass and weeds, which grew rankly there.

They walked on toward the fisherman, a tall, raw-boned, sandy-haired man, who seemed by no means inclined to be communicative. He kept his attention directed to his net, answering their questions in the shortest mode possible.

Meanwhile Fred had disappeared.

In fact, he was worming his way through the tall weeds to the bank of the inlet, along which he crawled, approaching the house foot by foot.

The dog of the fisherman, a shaggy terrier, was amusing himself by barking at the strangers who were talking to his master. He failed to discover this figure creeping through the weeds, or he might have had a more prolific source of amusement. A long-bodied, sleek cat, however, discovered Fred, stalked majestically down and took a close observation of him, and glided away again. Fred's eye just caught her as she was passing around the corner of the house.

"Ha!" he thought, delightedly. "White! Feet and tail tipped with black! I've seen that cat before. If I ain't I'm a monkey. Sure as shooting I'm on the right track."

He had now reached the corner of the house. A narrow bank of earth, not more than three feet in width, separated it from the inlet. Fred could hear some sounds within, as if the women of the household were at work. A window from the side overlooked the bank and the waters of the inlet.

"I have got to work another traverse," thought Fred. "Can't play mole handy. Will have to play muskrat."

He was not long in putting his plan into operation. Hastily slipping off his shoes, coat, and hat, he hid them in a cluster of bushes which grew beside the house. His next movement was to back down the steep bank, and slip noiselessly into the water. He was now hidden from observation by the inmates of the house, the bank cutting off the view.

"That boat went in here somewhere," thought Fred, as he worked his way through the shallow edge of the water. "Where it went I can go."

Suddenly he was soured over head and ears in deep water. He had stepped into a pool—or was it a ditch leading inward? But the bank here seemed unbroken.

Fortunately Fred knew a trick worth two of that. His quick eye perceived in the bank scarcely perceptible lines, like cracks in the earth. Feeling below the water's surface he discovered that the bank sud-

denly ceased; he had hold of a narrow edge of timber which yielded easily to his pull.

The secret was revealed. The seemingly solid bank was a swinging gateway, formed of boards, and covered with a thick deposit of clay. In this latter the grass and weeds had taken root, so that the bank seemed absolutely continuous, except for the narrow cracks which were only observable to very close examination.

Fred could hardly repress a whistle, or a cry of exultation, as he made this discovery.

"Cute as cucumbers," he mentally remarked. "Plaster it up again every time it's used. All right. I won't open your gate. I'll climb under like many a muskrat has before me."

Diving beneath the water, he was in an instant past the obstruction, rising into utter darkness beyond.

But Fred was on old ground now, and did not mind the darkness a fig. His feet touched bottom, and he waded in to where a very faint glimmer of light showed him that he had entered his old prison-like apartment.

The young explorer lost not a second in clambering out of the water, and to the earthen floor of the underground room, so deftly excavated in the earth beneath the fisherman's hut.

He knew the way to the door leading to the next room, and in a moment had entered it. The light here was very dim, being the faint gleam that made its way through imperceptible cracks above. It was several minutes ere he could accustom his eyes to the darkness, and get an idea of his surroundings.

"There's the table and chairs," said Fred, gradually making out the objects in the room. "And, by thunder, there's the three knots in the washboard. That settles it. I am in the right room in earnest."

He only made out these knots by stooping down to a very close inspection. He now made the round of the room, examining every object closely. It contained several closets, all locked except one. This he pulled open. On its shelves were a number of packages firmly bound up in oil-cloth coverings.

Fred was strongly disposed to investigate the contents of these packages, and had already opened his penknife for the purpose of making an incision in their coverings, when a sound above caused him to hesitate.

It was a quick step, followed by the opening and closing of a door. This was immediately succeeded by a creaking sound, while the light became suddenly stronger, displaying a flight of stairs, which he had not before observed, in a corner of the room. It was from this point that the light came.

"A trap-door!" mentally exclaimed Fred. "It's 'bout time to make tracks."

His bare feet made no sound on the floor as he hurried across the room. In a moment he had dropped himself as noiselessly into the stream.

In fact, while he had been making these observations, other events had been occurring above. The fisherman grew shorter and shorter in his answers to the questioning strangers. He suddenly looked round.

"Where's the chap that was with you?" he cried. "There were three of you a minute or two ago."

"Fast asleep, I fancy, back there in the grass," said Harry, indifferently.

"He can sleep, that chap," remarked old Tom. "He's a hoss at sleepin'."

"At burglarin' maybe," retorted the man, suspiciously. "Dang him, if he's trying to rob me, I'll treat him to a dose of buckshot."

He ran quickly to the house, and disappeared within, closing the door behind him.

"Hain't we best follow?" asked Harry. "If he finds the boy he might harm him."

"Not that rooster," replied old Tom, contemptuously. "I'll match Fred ag'in a barnyard full of sich coves."

They walked slowly over toward where Fred had disappeared. He was nowhere in sight. In a few minutes the fisherman emerged again from his cabin.

"Blast the chap! where is he?" he fiercely cried. "I know he's playing some confounded game about here."

He stalked hastily through the grass, stumbling and almost falling over some object hidden in the thick weeds.

To the surprise of all present Fred lifted his head from the spot, drawing out in a sleepy accent:

"Wish you'd let a fellow alone when he's taking a snooze. Can't you keep your stumbling feet to yourself, without kicking along that a-way?"

"What in the blazes are you sleeping in my grass for?" cried the man, savagely. "I will kick you again for a hint to keep away from here."

He ran fiercely at Fred, who lay almost on the brink of the inlet. He lifted his foot for a fierce kick, but he calculated slightly without his host.

For, at the same instant, Fred flung himself suddenly toward him, tripping him up, so that the impulse of his movement carried him over the boy's back, head foremost into the inlet.

"Let's absquatulate," cried Fred, laughing. "A wash will do him good."

"Any luck?" asked Harry, as they walked quickly away.

"Lots of it. Chunks of it," returned Fred. "A whole houseful of the gayest luck you ever heard of."

CHAPTER XIII. A JOURNEY BY RAIL.

"Do you know that I have never yet thanked you for your great service to me?" said Rose Darlington, in a low tone, as she seated herself beside Fred Halyard.

"My great service?" asked Fred, in a tone of sur-

prise. He had seated himself here to watch the game of croquet, in which Rose Darlington and Wilbur Howard were partners.

"You don't deserve thanks," returned Rose, somewhat petulantly. "It is a matter of such slight importance with you to save a person's life, that it is not worth remembering."

"Oh! indeed, you are wrong!" he earnestly replied. "But there has so much passed since, that I did not catch your meaning for the moment."

"You have had your own life to save. And that of many others," she rejoined.

"But, believe me, your life was worth to me that of all the rest. I would have risked mine twenty times over to save you."

"Now! no compliments, Mr. Halyard!" she answered, holding up her finger in admonition. "I do not agree with you in any such idea."

"You do not know your own value," returned Fred, with a smile.

Will Howard made a very bad shot, and missed his ball—it might have been intentionally. He walked quickly over to where Rose and Fred were seated, greeting the latter with a nod so slight that he did not think it worth the trouble of returning.

"It will be your turn in a minute, Miss Darlington," he said, in a tone of which the vexation was hardly disguised.

"I know it," replied Rose, without moving. "As soon as Miss Munson rivals the success of your last hit."

Will bit his lip, and turned away to hide the expression of his face. His intended reproof had not been at all successful.

"Yes, Mr. Halyard. I owe you a deep debt of gratitude," said Rose. "I should be sorry ever to forget my obligations to you."

"I hope you will not look on it in that light," returned Fred, a flush coming into his handsome face.

Will Howard was evidently seriously vexed. He had turned his back to them, and was involuntarily grasping his mallet as if it had been a weapon.

"Miss Darlington, it is your turn," called the lady who had just played.

Rose took her place in the game. Whether or not she wished to reprove Will for his bad playing, she was especially careful, and sent her ball through three wickets ere failing.

He had taken her seat, and sat moodily scraping the sand with his mallet. She walked over and stood silently beside him while the gentleman of the other side played. He failed, after a shot or two.

"Come, Mr. Howard," called out Miss Munson, petulantly. "You two do not seem to take any interest in the game."

"Is it my turn already?" he exclaimed, with an effort at gayety. "How is a person to get a minute's rest, if you finish your turns so quickly?"

"Don't boast, sir, you are not out yet," retorted Miss Munson.

Rose reseated herself beside Fred as Will went to the game.

She sat still for an instant, and then turned to him quickly.

"Is it true," she asked, "as people say, that Mr. Howard took part in that life boat expedition in consequence of a quarrel and a challenge with you?"

Fred started, and a look of disapprobation came upon his face.

"That is hardly a fair question, Miss Darlington," he replied.

"You gentlemen always make that answer when you do not wish to say yes," returned Rose. "I have a reason for asking, Mr. Halyard. It is not idle curiosity on my part. And I should be glad to learn the cause of the quarrel."

"It was a mere trifle. Some hasty words only," replied Fred. "I would prefer that Mr. Howard should tell you."

Will Howard was again through with his turn. But this time he did not approach them, or even look toward them.

"He was in fault. I am sure of that."

"There was nobody seriously in fault, Miss Darlington," said Fred, gravely.

She was again called to the field, and Fred rose and walked away.

He was not pleased with this questioning. And yet, after a moment's thought, he said to himself: "If she is engaged to Mr. Howard she certainly has a right to know his character. It might have been better if I had spoken plainly."

"Fred Halyard! The very chap I was looking for!" cried Mr. Proctor, as Fred reached the porch of the Mansion House. "I have work cut out for you, my boy, if you are ready to undertake it."

"That depends," replied Fred, "if I am fit for the work, or the work fit for me."

"Were you ever in New York?"

"No," answered Fred, looking up with interest. The name of New York had a wonderfully attractive sound to him. "I have been nowhere, except around this country; with some short trips to sea."

"Do you think you could make your way about there?"

"Nobody was ever lost who knew how to use his tongue," returned Fred. "Except he was in a desert. A man must be deaf, dumb, and blind, to be lost in a city."

"The captain and mate of the Triton leave this afternoon for New York. At least they say that is their destination. And, as they have no reason to fancy themselves suspected, it may be. I think it important to know just where they go, who they see, and what they do. And I know nobody wider-awake than Fred Halyard for a delicate job of this kind."

Fred reflected a moment. He would like to go to New York. But he did not want to spoil Mr. Proctor's plans. He shook his head, doubtfully.

"I will never do for that task."

"Why not?" asked Mr. Proctor.

"They know me too well."

"You can easily keep out of sight. They will not be on their guard."

"Well, if you are willing to trust me—"

"I know that you will do it all right," said Mr. Proctor, enthusiastically. "I have confidence in your wit, my boy."

"More than I have," replied Fred. "But I don't think they will throw me easily. When do they go?"

"In the three o'clock afternoon train. Can you be ready by that time?"

"I can be ready in ten minutes," returned Fred.

"I hardly think I will take a trunk with me on this trip."

Mr. Proctor laughed, and proceeded to go more into the details of his project, giving the boy close instructions as how he was to act.

"Meanwhile, we will be at work, here," he continued. "These two men went out for a fishing trip on the inlet this morning. But it wasn't sheephead or trout they were after. I watched them with a glass from the light-house, and they rowed straight into the inlets, toward the fisherman's cabin, which you and Harry tracked yesterday."

"Ha! That is interesting!" exclaimed Fred. "Are you going to raid it?"

"This very night. I only want them to get fairly out of town first."

"Don't wait for night. Delays are dangerous," said Fred, in a meaning tone.

"There will hardly be anything removed before night," replied Mr. Proctor. "They would not risk moving their contraband stuffs by daylight."

"They may," rejoined Fred, with a dubious look.

"The fact is, Mr. Proctor, I am not quite sure whether I shut that closet door. And my wet clothes must have left their mark on the floor. If the fisherman has found my tracks it's my notion there's not a minute to lose."

"You are right, Fred," cried Mr. Proctor, hastily rising. "An hour's time may save them. Do you get ready at once for your journey, and I will wake up Harry Bains and his crew. It will be our best plan to row over."

Fred hurried toward his home, full of boyish enthusiasm at the new experience before him. He had hardly known, in his contracted life, what it meant to travel by rail, and cities were to him *terra incognita*—always excepting Beach City.

He was stopped on the way by Mr. Darlington, who engaged him in conversation for several minutes. As Fred walked on after this interruption he noticed two gentlemen coming toward him, whom he recognized at a glance as the passengers who had been saved from the Triton.

He passed them without noticing that their eyes were closely fixed on Mr. Darlington.

"I knew him at first sight," said the father to the son. "But I had to play ignorant then. That was hardly the time to request a private interview with my friend, Mr. Darlington."

"Are you sure he knew you?" asked the son.

"If you had seen his pale face you would not ask that question. And if he did not I can easily refresh his memory."

Fred was ready at train-time. He had donned his best clothes in honor of the occasion. His form was one on which fashionably-cut clothes sat with grace. He was too natural in his movements to be awkward. Any one would have supposed him a young gentleman returning from a long visit to the shore, in which he had exposed his face rather freely to the sun.

The persons of whom he was in pursuit were present. Fred managed to keep himself out of their sight. Yet it was not through mere chance that he was lounging near the ticket office when the captain approached to procure his ticket. To his surprise his quick eye caught the demand for a ticket for a way-station instead of a through passage to New York.

"That's my station," said Fred to himself, obtaining a ticket for the same place, though with a shadow of disappointment in his heart.

"A man makes a larger track in a small place," he philosophically soliloquized. "It may make my job easier. It is plain enough that they have some trickery on the carpet."

The train rolled rapidly away. As may be imagined Fred was deeply interested in the journey, keeping his eye at the car window, and watching the farms, villages and towns which they passed with unwearying interest.

"What station is this?" he asked of the brakeman, as the engine stopped longer than usual.

"Midway. We water here."

"Are we near Concord?"

"It is the second station ahead."

Fred stepped out on the car platform. He was cramped from sitting so long in one position. Midway was evidently a railroad junction. A track crossed at right angles the one upon which they were.

"That must be the South Jersey road," said Fred to himself. "But as I ain't going down South Jersey, I'd best get back in the train."

He had his hand on the guard, and was about to step back into the car, when he saw a passenger descending from a forward car, followed immediately by another. It was the captain and mate of the Triton.

Fred hastily loosed his hold, and turned away so asto hide his face.

"Who knows?" he soliloquized. "Folks have changed their minds. Maybe I'll go down South Jersey yet."

The two passengers walked into the waiting-room of the station. The train steamed away without them.

"Cute they are," remarked Fred. "And come near as a hair flinging me. But a miss is as good as a mile, and I've got a strong notion to go down South Jersey."

He could not play the game here which he had in the crowded station at Beach City. He did not even dare to enter the waiting-room. He must trust to chance and vigilance to find where they were going.

"I found out too much before," he thought. "The rogues like to have dished me. I'll trust to eyes instead of ears this time."

He waited nearly an hour ere the South Jersey train came puffing up to the station. Fred kept well in the background until he had seen his game safely on board, and then took the car next to theirs.

But, in his new caution, he did not get on board until the train had actually started. He was bound to keep them bagged this time.

Fred had obtained no ticket, but he compromised the matter by paying the conductor for a few stations in advance. He could easily pay again if it became necessary.

And Fred, somehow, had business on the platform at every stop that was made. If he had been inspector of platforms he could not have been more diligent.

"All out for Crockettstown!" cried the conductor. Fred, as usual, hastened to get out.

"All aboard!" came a quick, following cry.

"Come, young man, you'll be hurt, yet, if you stand out at every station till the train starts," said the brakeman.

"I'm all aboard!" replied Fred, grasping the step-guard.

"No, I'm not," he suddenly repeated. "Guess I'll stop at Crockettstown."

He had caught a glimpse of two men descending from the forward car.

Fred walked toward the lower end of the platform as the train started and slowly gained headway.

"I've heard of this place, before," said Fred. "It's where Jim Bundy, the sailor that came ashore with me, is settled. I'd like to call on him and see if his memory has come back."

As he thus soliloquized he was keeping a close eye on the captain and mate of the Triton, who walked quickly away down the main street of the little town.

He had no occasion to follow them, for he saw them, from where he stood, entering a house about half-way down the short street.

Fred was not long in taking a closer observation of this establishment.

A sign-board swung in front of it, ornamented by a figure of some nondescript animal, painted in faded vermilion.

"Red Lion Inn, by James Bundy," he read, retreating a step, in his astonishment. "Well, if this don't beat Bannager! Never thought I was going to make this roundabout trip to call on Jim Bundy."

Meanwhile his friends at Beach City had been less successful. They had safely reached the fisherman's cabin—to be told by his wife that he was away, and would not be back for a day or two.

Then, somewhat against the will of this good lady, the cabin was closely searched, but without finding any entrance leading below. The doorway to the underground apartment was too well hidden to be easily found.

They did not hunt long, however. There was the water way. In a few minutes more the swinging door discovered by Fred was swung back, revealing a narrow channel just wide enough for a boat to traverse.

It was deep darkness within, but the light of a torch soon settled that. The boat was hauled inside. The men leaped ashore, and the two underground rooms were quickly explored.

An oath of mighty import came from Harry Bains's lips as he looked about him. The locked closets, of which Fred had spoken, were wide open—and empty. They had taken the alarm and fled with the spoils.

One of the men ran up the stairs in the corner of the room, and lifted the trap-door at their head. It opened into a large, dark closet, which had concealed it from their former search. Indeed, it fitted so closely above that it was not easily traceable.

"What next?" asked Mr. Proctor, in dismay.

Without answering Harry dashed out of the house, and to the neighboring village of Swamptown. He was back again within fifteen minutes.

"It is as I thought," he exclaimed. "Our contraband fisherman has been gone these three hours, by carriage, and all his spoils with him. I have hired the fastest team in the place. There is nothing now but to give chase. Take the boat back, boys. Mr. Proctor and I will tend to this little business."

He dashed away again for the town, Mr. Proctor closely following.

CHAPTER XIV.

A TIGHT RACE.

FRED HALYARD put up at the Black Horse, the rival tavern to the Red Lion. It was a little further up the street, but commanded an easy view of the portal of that place of entertainment—for man and beast as its sign indicated.

He would not have hesitated to acknowledge that he was hungry. It was full supper time, and his journey had given him an appetite.

"But it's too confounded hot to go inside," said Fred, to the proprietor. "Can't you send me a bit of bread and cheese, or something else eatable, out here? I rather like your porch, and would sooner sit where I am."

He did not want to lose sight of the Red Lion, in fact.

The landlord, without delay, sent Fred out a substantial meal, arranged with more abundance than taste on a little square table. But as it was abundance rather than taste which Fred just then desired, he did not hesitate to attack the viands with all the zeal of a hungry man.

"Won't you take a noggin of ale, to wash it down?" inquired the landlord. "It's dry eating."

"Don't care if I do, being 'sit's you," returned Fred, carelessly.

Unhappy noggin of ale. It was something the boy was not accustomed to, and it went to his head, giving him a swimming sensation that was not agreeable.

Fred stretched himself at full length on the bench, with his arm under his head for a pillow. He felt so much more comfortable in that attitude, and could watch the lay of the land about the Red Lion equally well.

It was surprising what a monstrous figure that Red Lion became, when closely observed. It was only a lion to a vivid imagination at the best. But it now seemed to Fred a cross between a bear, a hippopotamus and a kangaroo. And this extraordinary creature took it into its queer head to step out of its frame, and take a stroll up the street of Crockettstown, snapping up every little dog it met, and licking its lips afterward with a curious forked tongue.

The monster had its eyes on the reclining youth. He tried to rise, fearing that he might be snapped up like the unfortunate dogs, but it was impossible. Something held him firmly to the bench.

And now the creature stood beside him, glaring down upon him with eyes which looked wonderfully like those of the mate of the Triton. In fact the whole face bore an odd resemblance to that of this individual.

Fred turned uneasily in his sleep. The fact is, though it did not seem so to him, he was dreaming. The monster was but a phantasm built out of "a noggin of ale."

This turn broke the current of his dream. He now suddenly found himself on board the Triton, flinging the log-book down to the mate, whose uplifted hand looked like the head of the vanished monster, the emerald on his finger seeming a single great, green, gleaming eye.

This persistent infusion of the mate into Fred's dream was not without its physical cause. For that individual really stood above him, looking down upon the sleeping face.

He had started out for an after-supper stroll through the diminutive town, and had at a glance recognized something familiar in the form of the sleeping boy on the porch of the rival inn. A red flush came into the embrowned face of the mate, as he lightly stepped up into the porch, and looked down upon the sleeper.

One glance at the boy's face, and there came an oath from his lips as hoarse as a hurricane, and full of the saltiest flavor of the deep sea.

"Trapped!" he ejaculated. "And by that infernal young rat who has been in our meal-bag for the last two weeks. I'd best have left him in the ditch, as Long Bill advised. But it's not too late, yet, to cut the young hound's weasand."

Half the blade of a dangerous-looking knife gleamed in the low rays of the sun, while a wicked look came into the eyes of the stern-featured man.

"It won't do, though," he continued. "Folks are too thick about here. And the rascal had a hand in taking me from the Triton. Hang him! he's as sharp as a steel-trap, or he'd never got to the windward of us this way. But if I don't circumvent him while he's snoozing, then tell me I don't know a capstan-bar from a hair-pin."

He walked quickly away, leaving Fred to the undisturbed enjoyment of his slumber. In a few minutes more he was in deep consultation with the captain, their wonder being specially exercised to understand how they had been recognized as the smugglers, and followed to this out-of-the-way locality.

"It can't be," said the captain, decidedly. "It's just impossible. He is here on some other business."

"Then his other business has struck him quick, for I twigg'd the chap this afternoon on the platform at Beach City. I thought then he was playing shy—tacking and filling round as if he had game in his eye. Blast him! I didn't reckon we were the game! We've got to shift harbor while he's snoozing, Cap."

"It looks thundering like it," replied the captain. "It would not show well on the log for two old salts like George Carstairs and Jake Miller to be outtailed by a jolly-boat like this boy."

Fred slept on, unaware of the tempest he had raised. He slept, in fact, till the loud rattle of wheels in the quiet street aroused him to a sense of something besides antediluvian monsters.

The boy sprang hastily to his feet, conscious in an instant that he had been out of duty. His first look was toward the Red Lion sign. That dread brute had returned to its frame, and was docilely swinging in the evening air.

The second look was at the vehicle whose coming had awakened him.

It had stopped in front of the Black Horse Inn, and its occupants were looking at Fred with the greatest surprise. Nor was his astonishment less than theirs, on recognizing the faces of Harry Bains and Mr. Proctor.

"What in the world brings you here?" exclaimed the latter. "I thought you were in New York."

"My pigeons did not fly straight," answered Fred, coolly. "And what in the world brings you here? I thought you were in Swamptown."

"Our pigeon did fly straight," answered Harry Bains. "Straight to Crockettstown. We've chased him twenty miles, now. If you'd kept your weather eye open, you'd have nailed him."

"That's true," said Fred, apologetically. "It's all the fault of a noggin of ale. How long have I been asleep, landlord?" he asked of that personage, who had just appeared.

"A matter of a good hour I should calculate," replied that individual, looking toward the sun, then near its setting. "You were having such a good time of it that I didn't want to disturb you."

"I wish you had, then," returned Fred. "Anything been going on around here while I was wasting time snoozing?"

"There was a chap from the Red Lion over here awhile ago, taking a look at you. I just caught sight of him with his eyes on you as if he thought you'd make very good eating."

"What sort of a man?" asked Fred, quickly.

"A short, heavy-set fellow, with a mahogany face, and ugly enough to turn milk sour."

"You are sure he came from the Red Lion?"

"He trotted back there straight as a die."

"We are badly sold, then," exclaimed Fred, with a disconsolate look. "And it's all my fault. If there'd been no use in staying awake I'd have been as spry as a sand-snipe. But just now, when a fellow wanted all his wits—hang it, landlord, it was all your noggin of ale!"

Harry Bains laughed at Fred's disconsolate manner.

"See here, my friend," he said to the landlord. "Has there been anything else stirring? We are on the track of a hollow-cheeked, sandy-whiskered coon, in a one-horse vehicle. Have you seen such a customer?"

"The identical chap drove into the Red Lion yard an hour ago, just after this young man went to sleep."

"The deuce you say! Then we are wasting time here." He gathered up the reins to drive on.

"Hold up, Harry," said Mr. Proctor. "We may find more than we bargain for, with our two burly sailors as reinforcements to the fisherman."

"Don't count on them," remarked Fred, gloomily. "I bet a cow everything is rose-colored now, and the whole party five miles away."

"You are right there," volunteered the landlord. "They drove away twenty minutes ago with Jim Bundy's best horse in the shafts."

"The blazes they did!" cried Harry. "Then our chase ain't done, that's all. How many were in the carriage?"

"Three. The man you call the fisherman, the thick-set man and another tall, fine-looking fellow."

"And have you a horse that can mate Jim Bundy's?" asked Mr. Proctor.

"Yes; and beat him hollow."

"Put him in our shafts then quick as lightning. We've got to overhaul those coons or bust!" exclaimed Harry.

"What's up?" asked the landlord, curiously.

"Time's up," cried Harry. "You can do your questioning after you've done your work."

At this imperative and fierce rejoinder the landlord hurried away. These were evidently not men to be trifled with.

"And I'll take a turn down to the Red Lion," announced Fred. "I'm curious to see Jim Bundy."

Our youth walked quickly down the street in front of the rival inn. It was an old-fashioned building with steep gables and long, low outhouses.

In front stood a pump and horse-trough, seemingly the resort of all journeyers through that quiet country town. A teamster was there now, watering his dusty and thirsty horses. On the porch stood a man who was talking with the roughly-dressed horseman.

Fred looked keenly at this individual. He was a small-framed, thin man, but with the wiry aspect of one capable of great exertion. His face was little more than skin and bone, and was deeply embrowned as if from constant exposure to the sun. There was an undefinable air about him of the sailor, which had first attracted the boy's attention.

"If that's Jim Bundy," thought Fred, "he must have been burnt deep, for fifteen years haven't bleached him. Guess I'll cross over for a closer look."

That it was Jim Bundy there was soon no doubt, for he heard the teamster address him by that name. Fred looked at him, as he passed the porch, with a deep and searching scrutiny. There was something peculiar about the man's eyes. They had a wandering, uncertain way, and did not seem capable of keeping themselves on any object for more than a minute at a time.

As the lad passed these doubtful organs rested upon him. For a wonder they became fixed, riveted upon Fred's countenance. Bundy fell back a step, a strange look coming into his face.

"Where have I seen those eyes?" he muttered.

"Is it the face of—?" He paused, in seeming perplexity. "The Monsoon—the Monsoon—" These words came from him as if in an effort to recall some forgotten event of the past. It was a half-frightened expression with which he continued to regard the young man.

"A fellow might think you knew me," said Fred, looking him squarely in the face.

"Never see'd you before," replied the man, with a peculiar movement of the head. "It were some other chap I were a-thinkin' of."

His face grew cunning as he spoke. He had evidently recovered from his surprise.

"Farewell, then," responded Fred, lightly, walking away.

"So that is Jim Bundy," he cogitated. "And what is 'the Monsoon'? I'd give my hat to know."

The carriage was ready when he reached the Black Horse. They lost no time in taking their seats.

"They have about a half-hour the start," cried the landlord. "And the road is a straight one. You'll have to drive like fun. Don't kill the horse, though."

"If I do I'll buy you another," replied Mr. Proctor, taking the reins. "It's public business, my friend."

"But you haven't said what's up."

"Law-breaking is up," returned Harry Bains.

"And time's up."

Away they rattled, into the cross-road which the landlord had indicated. It was a smooth, well-made country road; their horse had strength and mettle; the evening was growing cool. They drove with the speed of Jehu.

"They won't count on such a quick chase," remarked Mr. Proctor. "If they lag we will come up with them."

"There are fresh wheel tracks," cried Fred. "This road isn't much traveled, and wagon-wheels tell their tale."

"You are right there, boy," replied Harry. "They can't throw us with a wake like that left behind them. Watch that it doesn't veer into a side road." For miles and miles, as it seemed, they drove on. The sun sunk below the horizon. The long twilight slowly deepened into darkness. It would soon be impossible to trace the tracks which had so far guided them.

"There is a town ahead," exclaimed Fred. "A railroad station, too, for yonder is the smoke of a train just starting out."

"And there is a wagon of some kind coming this way," continued Harry.

The approaching vehicle soon drew near. It held but one person, whom a glance told them was the sandy-haired fisherman of Swamptown.

"By Jove, they've slipped us!" exclaimed Harry.

"Hold up there, my friend," cried Mr. Proctor, checking his own horse, and drawing a pistol, which he presented at the fisherman.

The latter, with a look of alarm, hastened to obey orders.

"Now let me know what you have done with your freight; and without a minute's parley."

"If you let out mebbe you'll catch 'em," replied the man, with a chuckle of satisfaction. "They're off in that train for York. If you've any sort of a lively critter thar you mought try."

"Anything aboard?" asked Mr. Proctor of Harry, who had jumped out, and inspected the fisherman's wagon.

"No, it's as empty as his skull-pan," rejoined Harry, with a look of disgust.

"Then let the rogue go to perdition, where he belongs," returned Mr. Proctor. "And hark you, my friend. You've got the wind of us so far; but if we don't come up with you yet there's no virtue in steam."

A chuckling laugh was the only reply of the fisherman, who, however, was very glad to get away from his unpleasant company.

"We'll try the town," Mr. Proctor briefly remarked. "The fellow may be lying."

He had told the truth, as they soon discovered. Inquiry of the ticket agent proved that two such persons had bought tickets for New York, and taken the train.

"Any baggage?" asked Harry.

"They had satchels. I did not see anything else."

"What time will that train reach New York?" asked Mr. Proctor.

"It's only an accommodation. It will not get there before eleven to-night."

"And there is no express that will beat it?"

"How is an express going to get ahead of it? Two trains can't very well pass each other on one track," said the agent, laughing.

"I supposed that you might sport some sidings," retorted Mr. Proctor, turning away.

"Anyhow there's no express gets in ahead of them—on this line."

"Is there on any line?" was the quick question, as Mr. Proctor turned back to the agent.

The latter personage consulted a time-table.

"If you were in Trenton now. There is a Pennsylvania R. R. Express passes there at nine."

"Trenton, eh? Can it be caught?" The question was quick and imperative.

The agent again examined his time-tables.

"It might," he said, dubiously. "There is a branch train leaves Brimhurst, three miles from here, in half an hour. It will connect at Trenton with the Penn'a Express, if it makes time."

"Three miles, eh? and half an hour to do it in? Many thanks," he called back to the agent. "Come, Fred, there's not a minute to lose. Wait for me here, Harry. We must not overload our horse."

They were off again, without delay, through the growing darkness, toward Brimhurst. Though the horse was feeling his former journey, he easily made the distance in time for the train.

And for a wonder it landed Fred in Trenton early enough to catch the nine o'clock express. There was little fear of delay when once safely aboard the lightning train. It rattled into the depot at Jersey City, on time, at a quarter to eleven.

Fifteen minutes to reach the South Jersey ferry! It needed keen work. Fred had received full instructions from Mr. Proctor how to act, and hastened as rapidly as his feet could carry him along the wharves on the Jersey City side.

The clock was just pointing to eleven when he entered the South Jersey depot—and, prompt on time, in rolled the accommodation train.

"I calculate we've flung the rat this time," said a passenger who, with a companion, passed close to where Fred stood with averted face.

"I calculate you haven't," thought the latter.

He was again on the track of his game.

CHAPTER XV.
MR. DARLINGTON'S VISITOR.

The storm which had produced such a sensation in Beach City might have occurred a month ago, for any evidence which the ocean retained of its late turmoil. It had now all the mildness and sunny gleam of the summer sea of the poets, and only for the battered remnants of the good barque, which had gone down in the waters, no trace of the hurricane would have existed.

Part of this unlucky vessel lay half buried in the sands of the bar, its deck at such an angle as to afford very insecure footing to the daring bathers who ventured out to it. The other half of the wreck had been rent to fragments, some of which came ashore with every tide. Portions of her cargo also came in, and made busy work for the inhabitants of the place. It was mostly, however, spoiled by its immersion in the sea, being composed of perishable goods.

The summer visitors were sitting about in their ordinary butterfly fashion, as if they supposed that life was all a summer, and had forgotten the lesson just taught them by the sea. Minds of deeper thought, indeed, could not look upon the resting ocean without a sense of awe, such as one must feel in viewing the face of a sleeping giant. But to the light-minded the storm was but a lively memory—something to brag of to their friends, but not to be chastened, awed and subdued by.

Rose Darlington was one of those to whom the lesson had come with an awe-inspiring effect. She looked now upon the ocean with a half-dread, as if it was never more to be trusted in her mind.

Will Howard laughed at what he called her sentiment.

"It is only a lazy lubber after all," he said, lightly. "It gets up a row, now and then, and tries to scare us out of our wits. But a man has only got to face it, and—" he finished his sentence with a disdainful twirl of his hand.

"Now, Will, you must not talk so," she replied, in a tone of displeasure. "I hoped that your experience would have a different effect on you from that. How can one be so near death's door, and treat it so lightly?"

"We can only go through once, Rose," he returned, indifferently. "I don't see why a fellow should get in a stew about it. That won't save it off."

"And is there nothing awful to you in the thought and the approach of the hereafter? I have been too near the dread gates myself lately to appreciate that flippant spirit."

"Why, yes, you had a narrow pull for it, that's a fact," he replied, in a tone very aggravating to her.

"In which you displayed your courage and philosophy by swimming ashore, and leaving me to take care of myself."

She spoke angrily, as if vexed by his indifference. "By Jove, Rose, I'd saved you if I could. But as I couldn't I didn't see a speck of use in drowning myself just to show off. I don't see that you would have been any better off by my making a corpse of myself."

Rose made no reply. She would not trust herself to speak. She could not forget that it was his rashness that had brought her into the danger in which he had deserted her.

He, too, was silent. They walked moodily down the sands for some distance. Neither seemed inclined to break the silence.

"I don't see," he at length remarked, "what you mean by treating me as if I was a great baby. You have been playing fast and loose with me for a year now, you know you have. I am sure we are both old enough to marry. Your father is perfectly willing. I cannot see why you should keep putting it off."

"You are not giving me reason to be in any great haste," was her answer, accompanied by an involuntary curl of her lip. "You act so differently now, Will, from what you did when we were first engaged."

"I feel just the same, Rose. But a fellow gets tired of spooning about a girl, you know."

"You shall have no occasion to spoon about me any longer," she exclaimed, now thoroughly angry. She turned and walked away from him.

"I know how it is," he scornfully called out. "It's that lot of a Jerseyman you are getting soft on, just because he swam ashore with you."

"Whom do you mean?" she quickly asked.

"I mean that Halyard boy—a chap that I have not quite settled with yet."

"I would advise you not to try to settle with him," she answered, her face full of scorn. "There may be some more life-boat service."

She hastened on, as if not deigning further words with him.

"So, the hound has been telling her that!" said Will, with an ejaculation that was almost an oath. "That's two I owe him. We will see if I don't get even with him."

Rose walked away, half angry and half amused. "The idea of his being jealous of Fred Halyard," she said to herself. "I like him, to be sure. But I am hardly in love yet with a boy, and an old sailor's protégé like Fred. But Will is getting really unbearable."

She continued her walk with a new thought in her head, at which she could not but laugh. The idea of her being smitten with Fred Halyard!

At about the same hour in which this scene occurred, Mr. Darlington was entertaining a visitor in his room at the Mansion House. It was the elder passenger of the Triton, the man whose escape from the ocean had seemed to him an apparition from the grave.

Nor did Mr. Darlington seem much more easy in his presence now than previously. He stood by the

window, drumming impatiently with his fingers, his face turned toward his visitor with an uncomfortable expectancy.

The latter, on the contrary, appeared entirely at his ease. Seated in Mr. Darlington's rocking-chair, he was rocking himself, luxuriously, his thumbs in his vest-pockets, while his unpleasantly pale face wore what he probably intended for a smile, though it was, to a considerable extent, a failure.

"So," said Mr. Darlington, with a gesture of disgust. "You have concluded to take off the mask you have been wearing these few days past? It was too transparent, indeed, to make it worth while to wear it."

"Did you see through me so easy as that?" asked the visitor, with a shrill laugh. "I thought I was deep; but I must have been very shallow."

"Yes, very," was the reply.

"I knew you. Of course I did. But I did not wish to trouble you to recall my face to your memory until I had made a few inquiries. There was no use to ask for an interview until I had my business laid out."

"Until you had figured out the amount of blackmail that would buy you off," observed Mr. Darlington.

"I don't like that word," replied the visitor. "Black-mal saviors of soiled hands. I have always kept mine moderately clean."

He held up his hands, and contemplated them with a show of great satisfaction.

"How much is your price?" asked Mr. Darlington, impatiently.

"Business is business, of course," answered the visitor. "You always were prompt on the nail."

"And you always ashamed to look your rascality in the face, Amos Yarnall. But, I want your answer. I wish to gauge your expectations."

"Precisely," drawled Yarnall, with an insolent intonation. "Well, then, Mr. Darlington, as I learn that you are worth half a million—"

"It is no matter what I am worth," was the angry interruption. "I wish to find out now at what price you value your honesty."

"I think at about five hundred thousand dollars." This answer was given with a cool insolence, and a look of fixed determination, that still further enraged Mr. Darlington.

"Our interview had better close," said the latter quickly advancing to the door, which he flung open. "I will bid you good-day, Mr. Yarnall. I will bring you round that half-million when I am ready to hand it over. Meanwhile let me advise you that this locality is unhealthy for persons of your complexion."

"If you really think so I will go," rejoined Mr. Yarnall, rising from his rocking-chair. "And I hope you will not be very long about it, Mr. Darlington. I should not care to be obliged to hurry you."

"Wait patiently until I come," retorted Mr. Darlington, with a smile of scorn. He was evidently thinking that Mr. Yarnall would have a good long wait.

"Oh! by the way," remarked the latter, from the passageway outside the door. "I forgot to mention that my son Frank is with me. You may have noticed him."

"I saw a young man who has something of your rascally expression," replied Mr. Darlington. "Ah! I am glad you noticed that," as if he had received a high compliment. "There is no doubt of his identity."

"But what is that to me?"

"I simply thought that you might possibly be interested in it. But perhaps you have forgotten the words of old Bruce's will."

"What do you mean, sir?"

"I have no objection to refresh your memory. His estate, you may recollect, was to go to the nearest heir in the second generation. Failing such an heir it descended to the first generation. It was under that clause that you inherited."

"I am well aware of all that."

"You inherited simply because George Bruce and his son—who was the real heir—disappeared during a sea voyage. They have never been heard of from that day to this."

"Except in Amos Yarnall's imagination."

"That was all imagination, indeed," said Yarnall, with his shrill laugh. "Although I have bled you a little by pretending to know where that boy might be found, it was all a mere fraud. I knew no more than the man in the moon."

"Well, you are growing honest, I declare!" exclaimed Mr. Darlington, in great surprise.

"Oh, yes! Rogues are always honest when honesty is the best policy, you know."

Mr. Darlington could have struck him for the insolence of his tone.

"There is enough of this," he impatiently exclaimed. "I don't see that we have any further business."

"Very little, that's a fact," returned Yarnall, indifferently. "I will only say, in conclusion, that I am a relative of Mr. Bruce. Not so near as you, to be sure; but still a legal relative. And, secondly, I have had advice on this matter and learn that my son Frank is the real heir under the will, in the absence of George Bruce's son."

"He was not born at the date of Mr. Bruce's death!" cried Mr. Darlington.

"Pardon me. I can prove that he was. I was under the same impression as you, or I might have troubled you somewhat sooner for that little matter of half a million. Good-day, Mr. Darlington. And I hope that you will appreciate the fact that Amos Yarnall is not the man to show his hand until he is sure of his trumps."

He turned coolly away, and walked off, leaving Mr. Darlington almost as pale as himself.

"Can it be so?" he muttered, catching at the door for support. This man will crush me, if he can, as heartlessly as he would crush a fly."

CHAPTER XVI.

A STROLL DOWN BROADWAY.

We must return to Fred Halyard, who had just taken up his lost trail again, at the ferry of the South Jersey R. R. Co., in Jersey City.

The two men whom he had seen walked on, Captain Carstairs lighting a cigar, and passing to the front of the ferry-boat to smoke. Fred did not think it advisable to follow too closely.

He heard them laughing to themselves as they conversed together.

"What a jolly old time they are having over the way they flung me off the scent," soliloquized Fred. "And how dreadful cheap they'd feel if they only had eyes in the back of their heads, and could see me safe back on their track. If they catch me snoozing again I'll sell out this business, and go into the truck line."

He took a seat in the cabin, well satisfied that his game could not escape by water. And the boy's heart throbbed with expectation as he saw through the windows of the ferry-boat a long line of wharves, and ships, and houses, stretching seemingly for miles away.

That was New York—that vast array of the works of man's hands. He was about to set foot within that seething tide of human life, as unceasingly active as the ocean he had left. No wonder his young heart beat high with wonder and expectation.

But all this was secondary now. He must track these men to their destination. He had been outwitted at Crockettstown. Would he be in New York?

As he thus cogitated the boat touched the wharf. Fred held back in the cabin until he saw his quarry step ashore. He then warily followed.

There were but few passengers, and not many persons about at that hour of the night. It was necessary to be very wary. In fact he was almost upon his prey ere he knew it. He had lost sight of them for an instant, and hastened forward, coming close upon them as they were chaffering with the driver of a carriage.

Fred pulled his hat down over his eyes and walked steadily on, brushing the mat as he passed him, but looking neither to right or left.

He went straight on to the other side of the street ere looking back. Reaching the pavement he carelessly turned, just in time to catch a glimpse of his two men entering the carriage for which they had been bargaining.

"I don't see why I can't afford a ride as well as those coons," thought Fred. "Mr. Proctor don't want me to walk where riding's healthier."

He was back across the street again quick as a flash. The cabman had just closed the door of his coach, and was mounting his box. To his utter surprise he found a slender young chap mounting from the other side.

"Well, if you haven't the making of a brass kettle in your face, I'll be shot!" he growled. "Down with you, you wharf-rat, or I'll burst your b'ller."

"Dry up, cabby," was Fred's somewhat insolent answer. "Wait till I shut your eye up before you explode. I can't afford an inside passage, but here's a good fifty-cent piece for a deck trip."

"Make it a dollar," said the cabman, with the instincts of his profession.

"Dry up, I tell you. I ain't here to buy your old cab."

"What's wrong there?" roared Captain Carstairs, putting his head out of the carriage door. "Are you going to be all night starting?"

"I'm off now," called back the cabman, giving the rein to his horses. "Hand it over," he said to Fred. "And you've got a mighty cheap ride."

"Oh, yes! dirt cheap," returned Fred. "It's a way you fellows have; driving cabs for pure charity."

The cabman laughed, and kept up his chaffing conversation with Fred, while they rolled up through streets which looked to the boy, in the midnight gloom, like deep rock channels through some vast plateau. And the line after line of gleaming lamps, which burst upon and faded from his eyes, appeared to him as if the city was getting up a grand illumination in his honor.

They stopped at the door of a hotel, in a wide, well-lighted street, that was yet thronged with human life.

"What do you call this street?" asked Fred.

"Now, that's too thin!" replied the cabman, with a wink. "A chap as sharp as you, and don't know the Bowery? That won't wash."

Fred laughed knowingly, and slipped from the cab on the street side, as its inside passengers got out upon the pavement, and entered the hotel, after settling with the driver.

"Good-night, cabby," cried Fred. "Guess I'll put up here, too."

"All right," returned the cabman. "You're a sharp young dog, you are. Good luck go with you."

He drove off as Fred entered the hotel. The captain and mate had already procured a room, and were on their way up-stairs as he cautiously ventured in.

"Guess I'll put up here, too," thought Fred. "They're good for the night. And I'm obliged to them for not taking me to one of your lofty-priced Broadway hotels. This is good enough for me."

In a half-hour more he was sweetly slumbering.

Fred had been used to early rising, and was wide awake at sunrise the ensuing morning. He was bound not to be caught napping on this occasion.

"I ain't much afeared, though, of their being very spry," he thought. "Except their bed turns out as

uncomfortable as mine was. I don't think they're the best judges going of a hotel."

Fred got an early breakfast, so as to be ready for the business of the day. He then provided himself with the morning papers, and ensconced himself in a corner, with his paper spread out that little more than his feet were visible.

And what a time he had reading those papers, with both ears on duty to catch the least sound of a footstep, and one eye constantly creeping around the edge of the journal he was perusing, in search of every passing form.

In fact, he was not getting much good from his reading. At length, however, his eyes fell upon a letter from Beach City, with a highly-painted description of the wreck of the Triton, in which his own share of the adventure was vividly detailed.

It was a new sensation to Fred to find himself in print, and he grew so interested in the description that, for the time, he lost his keen surveillance of passing events.

He was roused to a sense of his heedlessness by the sound of a voice addressing him:

"Will you let me look at your *Tribune* for a few minutes, young man?"

It was the voice of Captain Carstairs.

A thrill ran through Fred's veins. Fortunately he had the paper he was reading opened so as to conceal his face and the upper part of his body.

He did not trust himself to speak, but slipped his hand into his lap, picked up the *Tribune* that lay there, and silently held it out. He seemed too deeply interested to take time to speak.

Captain Carstairs quietly took it and walked away, paying no further attention to the reader.

It was full five minutes before Fred ventured to look around the edge of his paper, to see the lay of the land.

The captain was seated in an arm-chair, intent upon his reading. The mate stood with both elbows on the office desk, chatting with the clerk. Neither was paying any attention to him.

"They'll want to borrow a toothpick next. Maybe I'd best vamoose," thought Fred. He rose, and sauntered to the door of the hotel, still reading, and carefully keeping his face concealed behind his paper.

Reaching the street he had immediate business on the other side. Here he found a very convenient seat on a dry-goods box, where he could continue his reading, wonder at the tide of life which ebbed and flowed up this busy street—and watch the entrance to the hotel opposite.

An hour, two hours, passed. It was ten o'clock. Fred began to fear that his men had found some other way out, and was just about to risk a re-entrance to the house, when they appeared at the door.

They took a preliminary glance up and down the street, and then emerged, walking slowly away. Fred kept pace with them on the other side of the street.

"This ain't Crockettstown, where a stranger is a white elephant," he soliloquized. "No danger of their getting suspicious of being followed in a crowd like this. Whew! isn't it a rush, though! A fellow might think that every one of them had left his house afire, and was running for the engine."

But if the unsophisticated lad was surprised here, he was thunderstruck when he emerged, at length, into Broadway, and beheld the turmoil and rush of that mountain torrent of life. He gazed with a sense of awe upon its immense buildings, and the vast white block of the post-office which seemed to wedge into and fill up the converging lines of the street.

"New York is some guns, and no mistake," was Fred's homely way of expressing his feelings. "But what kind of a million-horse power mill it is that spouts out all these men and women, and drays and wagons, is a bit above my arithmetic."

He drew closer and closer to his men. It seemed so easy to lose them in those countless throngs.

They walked for a considerable distance down Broadway, gradually checking their pace, and examining the stores they were passing.

Finally, after a close look at a signboard, they entered one of these stores.

Fred emulated them in reading the sign. It ran as follows:

"J. W. Tompkins, Son & Co. Silks and General Dry-goods."

He was for a short time at a loss just what to do. It might be dangerous to enter. It might be dangerous to remain outside. He waited, however, for some ten minutes, and as they did not reappear, he boldly walked into the store.

It was an immense floor, well covered with open cases of goods. Little attention was paid to him by the busy clerks, and he walked back, looking keenly for his game.

At the rear of the store was a large office, well supplied with clerks. Opposite this was a smaller office, with a window opening upon the store, which was lifted a few inches. Fred rightly conjectured that it was a private office.

And, not greatly to his surprise, he saw through the crack in the window, the head of Captain Carstairs turned from him, and toward another person who sat facing outward.

"What can I do for you?" asked a clerk, briskly approaching Fred.

"If you could get me a glass of water to begin with I'd thank you," replied our hero. "I feel a little faint."

"Certainly. Of course," said the salesman, hastening away.

Fred took the opportunity to glide stoopingly to a low stool that stood just beneath the open window. His keen ear was almost at the opening.

"She will be ready to clear by August 25th," spoke the voice of a stranger to him. "You can reach Liverpool in time to take hold."

"And I hope the Mary Ann won't follow the Monsoon and the Triton," returned the mate's voice. "Bad luck goes by threes, you know."

"But if it's fifteen years apart it's worth risking," replied the first speaker.

"Is our private cargo made up?" asked Captain Carstairs.

"Speak lower, man. You have too much of the hurricane in your tone," came a warning voice. "You will find all ready. You say that our last venture is safe?"

"Yes. At Bundy's. But it may not be safe to leave it there long."

Fred saw the man approaching with his glass of water. He slipped away from his post of vantage.

He had not caught many words, but they were brimful of meaning. He had hit the conversation in the very heart of its suggestiveness.

"I've a notion we've got them by the horns," thought Fred.

CHAPTER XVII.

JACK BUNCE SPEAKS.

THE reader must follow us now to a room in old Tom Halyard's residence, which was the favorite sitting apartment of the old sailor, and which, but that it had none of the rocking motion of the deep sea, might have passed for the cabin of a sea-going ship.

It was fitted up with all the nautical appurtenances of which the old man had become possessed during his years of shore life, and many of which had been cast ashore by the angry sea during the winter storms which visited that coast.

Even the Triton had added to this store, the furniture being a compound of the odds and ends of years of wreck and ruin, and of curious relics from far-off lands which the restless ocean had borne to those shores.

There were four persons present. Old Tom himself and his adopted son, Harry Bains and Mr. Proctor making up the company.

The old man stroked his grizzled beard in delight as he listened to Fred's story of his adventures in pursuit of the smugglers, and of his final success.

"You're a chip of the old block, lad!" he cried. "Don't know what old block it is; but I know that it was Tom Halyard that brung ye into shape; and you're an honor to his trainin'."

"Hold up, old man," returned Harry Bains. "Don't be making a fool of the lad with your sweet oil. There's no use spoiling good timber with polish. And so you nailed them, Fred?"

"Yes," replied Fred, quietly. "If we are wide-awake when the Mary Ann comes in we may have better luck than in the last venture."

"Go on with your story," said Mr. Proctor, impatient of these interruptions.

"There is little more to tell," responded Fred. "I went into the dry-goods business with Tompkins's salesman, and gave him a very fair order for goods, to be shipped to St. Louis. I had to countermand it the next day," he continued, laughing. "I calculate, though, they would hardly have shipped to the house I represented, except they felt like going it blind."

"Did you hear anything more?"

"Why, I managed to get my ear under the window for another ten minutes. But they had slipped into another line of business. I picked up, though, that they would make their landing on Turtle Island, and have their shore agent on hand to take off the goods. The signal to be three lights in a triangle at the fore-top."

"But that's as good as gold!" exclaimed Harry Bains, jubilantly, slapping his knee. "It's to be answered from the shore, of course."

"Yes. The answer the same as the signal."

"Go on. You are not through yet," said Mr. Proctor.

"I had my own fun for two or three days," responded Fred, "seeing and doing New York. And what a place it is! A fellow would think all America had been busy for ten centuries building it. And it must have used up more than one mountain to supply the stone. And for the people—whew! it's no wonder where the summer overflow comes from. I used to think at one time that all New York must come to the sea-shore. But it's hardly a ripple."

They all laughed at Fred's enthusiasm. He had evidently been deeply impressed with the immensity of the metropolis.

"But seeing New York was not your principal business," remarked Mr. Proctor.

"You can bet I kept an eye on my game. I holed them at last, on board the Cunard steamer, the Asia, bound for England and a market. Their friend Tompkins was down to see them off. But I did not find it convenient to pick up any more points."

"You have done very well," replied Mr. Proctor, approvingly.

"Did you have as good luck?" asked Fred. "How did the Red Lion show up?"

"Not worth a cent, Fred," returned old Tom. "Jim Bundy was too old for them."

"From what your men said the goods must be there, Fred," broke in Harry. "But we couldn't raid a stitch of them. There must be some confoundedly cunning hiding-place about that concern, for we hunted it close, I promise you that."

"They will be removed soon," returned Fred. "The Red Lion needs close watching."

"And I know no better eyes than Fred Halyard's for that duty," rejoined Mr. Proctor, "if he doesn't do too much sleeping on the porch of the Black Horse."

Fred laughed at the recollection of his dream. By way of changing the subject, he asked lightly:

"Did any of you ever hear of a craft called the Monsoon? I am growing curious about it. It must have gone ashore fifteen years ago, according to the mate of the Triton. And Jim Bundy spoke of it when he saw me. My face seemed to call up some shred of memory to his empty brain."

"The thunder you say!" cried old Tom. "The Monsoon!"

"What about the Monsoon!" came a deep voice from the door.

They all hastily turned. There stood the handsome sailor, Jack Bunce, his face full of interest.

"What do you know about her?" asked old Tom, anxiously.

"I sailed in her once, Captain Carstairs commanding. She went out again under a new master. The sea swallowed her. She was never heard of again."

"How long ago was that?"

"A matter of fifteen or sixteen years."

A significant look passed between Tom and Harry Bains. There was excitement in the old man's face. He looked again at the sailor.

"What kind of a craft was this Monsoon?" he anxiously inquired.

"A Clyde-built, ship-rigged, sharp-nosed customer. She was narrow-beamed, and set low in the water."

"By Jove, Tom!" cried Harry Bains. "That would answer for the craft that brought Fred ashore."

By this time the old man was quivering with excitement. Fred, who sat beside him, quietly took his hand. The boy wished to assure him that nothing should part them.

"Did she come ashore on this coast?" asked the sailor.

"A ship struck here fifteen years ago," answered Harry Bains. "She landed but two passengers. The raging sea didn't leave a nail that she could be told by."

"But the passengers?"

"One was a baby. This is him," laying his hand on the boy's head. "The other was a sailor. But the sea washed his brain clean of memory. Left it as blank as a fresh sheet of paper. He had to begin life fresh."

"That's odd," said Jack Bunce. "Was his name gone, too?"

"Yes," replied Tom. "He sails now under new colors."

"What sort of a looking tar was he?"

"A thin, wiry fellow," answered Harry. "All skin and bone; light hair and eyes, and a nose as sharp as a corkscrew."

Jack stood holding by the door-frame, in deep thought for several minutes. They all looked curiously toward him, without breaking the silence.

"Does he still answer to the roll-call of life?" he at length queried.

"Yes."

"Whereaway?"

"He keeps the Red Lion Inn, at Crockettstown, twenty miles from here."

"I must get my weather-eye on the chap. He may, and he mayn't be an old shipmate," responded Jack.

Fred took an early opportunity to escape from the room. His mind was overflowing with thought. He wished to be alone with his emotions. Could it be that the mystery of his life was about to be revealed? Did that stranger hold the key to his history? The thought was not entirely pleasant to him. His life had been a happy one. He wanted no father to replace old Tom Halyard. Yet, the craving to know more of his true history, to have the thick veil of mystery which shrouded his early life lifted, was strong within him. He walked on, thinking, until his mind was in a whirl. Was he the heir to wealth and honor, or to disgrace that had better be left forever buried?

His deep day-dream was broken by the sound of a well-known and always welcome voice.

"Excuse me, Mr. Halyard, for disturbing you, but—"

"You need no excuses," he quickly interrupted. "I am unpardonable for not seeing you."

"Not at all," Rose Darlington—for it was she—laughingly replied. "Little people, like me, often pass through life unseen. But I heard that your father had been unwell, and wished to inquire after him."

"It was only a day's sickness," rejoined Fred. "He is well, again. And I am much obliged, indeed, for your interest in him."

"I like him, ever so much," she answered. "He is my beau ideal of an old sailor."

They walked on down the beach, still conversing. At this hour there were few abroad, and they had the beaten pathway of the sands almost to themselves. To their left the incessant roll of the surf broke in its endless thunder. The rippling flow of its waters almost reached their feet. The beach was strewn with shells and sea-weed, and occasionally with some rarer wonder of the deep, flung up by the revealing waves.

Their conversation dropped into a lower key. The sands, the surf, the shells, all furnished themes for thought. Rose listened with surprise to the deep vein of contemplation that dwelt in this youth, reared on the borders of the sea, and to the poetical diction in which, at times, he clothed his thoughts. There was a deeper vein within him than she had previously felt. She found herself listening with eager interest to his words.

Or was it more than interest? Will Howard's accusation had set her thinking. She felt herself drawn more closely and strangely than she had

led toward this young man. She had known him for several summers, during her annual visits, and had always found him kind, considerate, and attentive; a little rough in training, but with all the instincts of a true gentleman. But since he had saved her life a new sentiment had arisen in her mind—fostered perhaps by the brusque and unpleasant demeanor of her betrothed. She was rapidly losing all love for Will Howard. Was it being replaced from another source?

Had Mr. Darlington heard the tone of Fred's voice and the softness of her replies, as they walked on, unconscious of distance, he would certainly have broken up this tête-à-tête. He had other views for his daughter—and the young so easily drift into mischievous heart troubles.

They were awakened from the dream in which only their two minds lived, and the sea and sky had almost vanished, by the loud laughter of a passing party. The beach was again filling up with people.

Rose, with a sense of shame at being seen in such close conversation with a plainly-dressed lad, the son of a well-known waterman of Beach City, hastily excused herself, and turned to walk toward the hotel. She was angry with herself, the next moment, for yielding to such a feeling. But the effects of early training lie too deep to be blown off by a breath.

Fred walked on, his brain in a maze. He, too, was beginning to learn the meaning of thoughts which had dwelt deeply within him, too vague to possess any definite form and meaning. They were both, as yet, drifting, but the direction of their drift must soon reveal itself.

He suddenly found himself face to face with Will Howard, who was regarding him with no pleased expression.

"I am afraid you need a lesson yet, my friend," he said. "I saw you speaking with a young lady whom I decidedly object to your annoying. You may find it to your interest to let me see no more of it."

"Certainly," was Fred's quiet reply. "When Miss Darlington expresses herself as annoyed by me, you shall see no more of it."

"No subterfuge, sir. Whether she says it or not, she thinks it. If you will continue to insult her, I shall protect her from insult."

"Very well," replied Fred, in a cool tone. "Any time you wish. Shall it be life boat service now? Or will you prefer some other mode?"

"You may save your insolence," exclaimed Will, enraged. "We shall see if I do not get even with you yet."

"All right," said Fred, lightly. "Any time, and any weapon. I'm your man."

He walked on, leaving his antagonist pale with anger.

CHAPTER XVIII

GETTING EVEN.

"Try and get back before night, Fred," said old Tom Halyard. "You know that you are to go on that business for Mr. Proctor to-morrow, and you will need a good night's sleep."

"I can row there and back by six o'clock, and not half try. I haven't had a good tussle with the oars these two weeks now, and it is about time I was getting my hand in practice again."

"No fear of you, boy," answered the old man, looking on him with pride. "There are not many can beat you at oar or tiller."

Fred laughed. Yet a flush of conscious pride came into his face. In fact, old Tom Halyard's praise was worth something. He did not lavish it lightly or indiscriminately.

The boy walked away with his swinging step and erect bearing. The old man's eyes were fixed upon him with a satisfaction, into which there slowly came a look of sadness. He shook his head gravely.

"I don't like this Monsoon business," he muttered. "A ship that's been buried for fifteen years ought to be well settled in the 'arth; but here comes this dead ship up again, like a ghost, to haunt my old age. But I can trust Fred, I can trust Fred—I know he will stick to the old man."

Fred walked on briskly. He turned into a street leading to the inlet. Here he encountered Mr. Darlington, who was advancing with his stately stride, his hat in his hand, and his ample brow exposed to the air.

"Ah! glad to see you, Fred," he exclaimed. "Where have you been these days past?"

"Out of the city, Mr. Darlington," Fred quietly answered.

"I missed you from the beach," returned the old gentleman, his eyes fixed on the lad's face with an intent scrutiny which Fred somehow did not relish. "Is he very anxious to know me again?" he asked himself.

"You will excuse me, Mr. Darlington. I am in something of a hurry to-day."

"Certainly, certainly," was the response. "Don't let me detain you."

As he spoke Fred noticed a different expression come upon his face, a flushed, annoyed, half-angry look. His eyes were bent down the street.

The boy turned and saw approaching a thin, stooping figure, with a strangely pallid face. He recognized him at a glance as the elder passenger of the Triton.

This personage approached, his eyes fixed meaningfully on Mr. Darlington. Only when he came opposite did he cast a passing glance upon Fred.

This look at once became fixed, eager, intent, while a slight shiver went through the man's frame. For a moment he seemed to forget where he was, in the sort of fascinated regard with which his eyes were riveted on the boy's face. He then recovered himself, and walked, rather unsteadily, on; a shade paler than usual, if possible.

Fred's eyes followed him with deep surprise.

"What ails the man?" he asked.

"One would imagine he had seen a ghost," replied Mr. Darlington, with a forced smile.

"I don't think I am very ghost-like," returned Fred, laughing. "But I must go, Mr. Darlington. Good-day."

"Good-day, Fred."

The lad walked onward, leaving the old gentleman standing in the midst of the pavement, looking after him with a strangely rapt regard.

"I am right," he muttered. "Amos Yarnall knew the face. If I can only prove it now! If I must be begged I would much rather trust myself in the boy's hands, than in those of this graveyard ghoul, this bloodsucking Amos Yarnall."

"Thank you," came a voice at his side. He had spoken these last words unwittingly loud. "You are disposed to be highly complimentary."

It was Amos Yarnall, who had returned. Mr. Darlington was, for the moment, disconcerted.

"What do you want?" he asked, in a harsh tone, assumed to hide his feeling of shame.

"Nothing particular," was the reply, given with an assumption of indifference. "Who was the boy that just left you?"

He attempted to make this question careless, but, despite himself, an eagerness crept into his voice, and a gleam of excitement into his eye, which Mr. Darlington did not fail to observe.

"A ghost," replied the latter, meaningly. "A shadow of the past before which Amos Yarnall trembles. Beach City is, just now, full of ghosts, my friend. Everybody is seeing the phantoms of former evil deeds."

"What nonsense is this?" asked Yarnall, angrily.

"The boy is only a shadow, whom I have conjured up to warn you that you had better moderate your claim. How much less are you disposed to take after seeing that face?"

"Not a cent," was the angry reply. "I will have all my son's just rights."

"You might have that and not be very rich," replied Mr. Darlington, in a tone of aggravating satire.

"Good-day, Mr. Yarnall. I may soon make you that promised visit."

He walked away with his proud step, leaving his questioner in a state of mingled anger and alarm, and muttering to himself in a strangely-absorbed manner.

Meanwhile Fred had reached the point of land where the inlet entered from the ocean. Here were some wharves with clusters of boats, and a frame structure used as an oyster and eating-house. Will Howard had just turned from the bar, and caught a glimpse of Fred as he entered. A look of hatred came into his face. He stepped to the door and looked after the lad, who had stopped to speak to a boatman.

"For a row up the inlet, Fred?" asked the latter.

"Yes, as far as Gore's."

"You'll find it a fresh day. How soon will you be back?"

"About six, I reckon," responded Fred.

A quick flash shot over Will Howard's face. He turned his head aside as if there was something revealed in his features which he preferred to hide. He watched Fred with an eager glance until he saw him, in a light boat, rowing across toward Turtle Island, with a long, easy, powerful stroke that sent him swiftly through the water.

Will Howard's experience in the Schuylkill navy had taught him the points of a good oarsman. He watched Fred for several minutes with involuntary admiration. He then turned away, touching, as he did so, a hard-featured, evil-eyed fellow, who stood near him.

The latter walked after him to a more secluded spot, where the two entered into earnest conversation.

Meanwhile, Fred was making swift headway up the broad, inner channel, the same which had been followed during the memorable chase of the smugglers. He enjoyed the fresh air, and the muscular exertion of rowing. Slender as he seemed, a keen eye would have seen a breadth of shoulders, and an expanse of chest that promised strength and endurance; while active exercise had given his arms an iron-like vigor and firmness.

The day moved on. Fred had accomplished his mission, and was rowing more slowly down the inlet, about five o'clock in the afternoon. The breeze had freshened, and was blowing now with considerable force.

He had noticed, for some time, a sail, which seemed to be moving through the inner channels which permeated the marsh. As he came opposite one of the outer openings of these channels, the sail emerged into the open water of the inlet.

It was a large, strong fishing boat, with an unusual show of canvas. Fred recognized it at a glance as belonging to Tim Grady, a fisherman, between whom and himself there was no love lost. The fellow, indeed, was not of the most savory reputation.

Fred rowed on without giving further attention to the sail-boat. The latter had caught the full force of the strong breeze on emerging into the inlet, and was shooting rapidly through the water toward his boat.

Thoughtless of any evil design on the part of the sail-boatman, he rowed easily onward, paying no heed to its rapid approach. It was now but a short distance from him, and he suddenly noticed two things. First, that the fisherman was accompanied by Will Howard. Secondly, that if they continued on that course he would be run down.

"Down with your helm!" he fiercely shouted. "Do you want to cut me in two? Down with your helm, I say!"

The sail-boat was swooping on him like a great

white-winged bird, to which his little skiff was but as a swallow to an eagle. The water seethed and foamed under its prow as it flew onward before the stiffening gale.

As Fred cried out he gave new strength to his oars, and his boat shot more rapidly onward. The steersman of the other craft moved his helm, but he gave it the wrong sheer. Instead of avoiding the skiff, it pointed directly toward it, not two boat-lengths distant.

Fred, for the first time, now fully realized their intention. He quickly gave his boat a shift so as to escape the threatened stroke—but it was too late. In a moment the powerful fishing-boat struck his light skiff nearly amidships. A grinding, rending, crashing noise succeeded. The boat was cut nearly in two, and rolled under its powerful antagonist—Fred saving himself by a quick leap overboard at the instant of the collision.

The event was too evidently intentional for the boy to be deceived for an instant. Not knowing what their full purpose might be he started to swim toward the island, which was not far distant.

But in a minute more the sail-boat glided between him and this refuge, Will Howard standing erect in it, oar in hand.

"Back!" he cried, savagely. "You are not going to get ashore so easily as that. I am going to give you a swim for your health. Straight down the inlet with you if you want to save your head from acquaintance with this oar."

A glance told Fred that he meant it. The quick-witted lad obeyed this stern mandate. He wanted time to think.

As for the swim he did not mind that. He was like a fish in the water, and could easily have swam to Beach City, if not incumbered by his heavy clothes. But he could not tell the full intentions of his antagonists, and it was necessary to keep every sense on the alert.

He continued to swim down the center of the channel, the swift boat playing about him, while Will Howard kept up a constant fire of scornful and insulting remarks.

"We will see if you speak to young ladies again, with your cur's tongue," he cried. "It's my game now, and I intend to be even with you."

"You are even with me," said Fred, in a faint voice. It was the first time he had spoken.

But he had been lately swimming with a heavy, unsteady stroke. He now suddenly threw up his arms, and went down beneath the water as helplessly as a stone.

"By Heaven!" cried Will, in alarm, "the fellow is drowning. I don't want that. We must save him."

"He will be up again," the fisherman coolly replied. "They always rise."

The course of the boat was shifted so as to bring it near where Fred had sunk. The man was right—he rose again just as they came opposite.

"Pull him in!" cried Will, grasping him by the collar.

The fisherman came to his assistance, and in a moment Fred was lifted from the water, a limp, dripping, apparently lifeless form, and laid flat in the bottom of the boat.

Will Howard gazed on him for a moment with a growing dread.

"What are we to do?" he asked, helplessly. "Can the fellow be drowned?"

"Drowned, the devil!" exclaimed the fisherman, roughly. "You don't drown us water rats so easy as that. Take the tiller a moment. I will tie him. We may have some trouble with him when he comes to."

Picking up a rope he stepped back to where Fred lay, and bent over him with the purpose of binding his arms.

But he calculated without his host. Suddenly as if an earthquake had opened beneath him the recumbent figure half-rose, grasped the stooping fisherman by the legs, and with a sudden, peculiar lift, hurled him headlong over the side of the boat into the waters of the inlet.

In a moment more Fred stood upright, looking down on Will Howard, who shrank as from an apparition.

"It is my turn now," exclaimed Fred. "You've had your play. I'll take a hand in the game."

They were already fifty yards from the fisherman, who was slowly swimming after them.

Will Howard rose as Fred approached him. In a moment they had grappled, and were struggling with all their strength for the mastery.

Will was much the heavier of the two, but he had not the toughness and agility of Fred. They were, in fact, very evenly matched, and they drew each other from end to end of the boat in their fierce struggle, now the one, now the other, having a temporary advantage.

The boat was directly before the wind, and held its course unchanged during this vigorous wrestle. Not a word was spoken. With set teeth and laboring breath they continued the conflict, as though they were two athletes striving for victory.

Fred, in fact, was working himself toward the rudder. Reaching it he shifted the tiller with his foot. Instantly the boat obeyed, veered round to meet the wind, and careened until their footing was rendered very precarious. Fred, fully prepared for this, stood like a rock, tearing himself loose from his reeling antagonist, and giving the latter a surge from which he vainly sought to recover. With a cry of alarm he plunged headlong over the side into the foaming water.

"Isn't the shoe on the other foot now?" asked Fred, tauntingly. "Have you any commands for Beach City? I'm bound straight there."

Howard had risen spluttering and cursing, threatening Fred with dire vengeance. The latter kept

his boat steadily down the channel, leaving them to do as they pleased. His last glimpse of them revealed them both swimming for the island, a decidedly crestfallen pair.

CHAPTER XIX.

A TURTLE ISLAND SUNSET.

The punishment of Will Howard and his villainous confederate was greater than Fred had conjectured or intended. The point at which they came ashore was some five miles up the inlet. The sun was shining warmly, and they took the opportunity of drying their soaking clothes in the warm beams ere proceeding further.

By the time this was accomplished it was past six o'clock. On resuming his clothes Will was not agreeably surprised to find that his suit of gray wool had shrunk considerably in the drying, and that he presented a figure which would make it more agreeable to him to reach Beach City after dark.

They therefore proceeded slowly down the island shore, calculating to reach the point opposite the city just before sunset, and to signal for some one to set them across the inlet. And the dire destruction to which they consigned Fred Halyard during this journey would scarcely have been comfortable to that young man.

Indeed they gave rather too much thought to schemes of vengeance, and too little to the flight of time. To their alarm the sun sunk below the horizon when they were still a mile from the requisite point.

"We must hurry like fun, or it will be dark afore we get there," exclaimed Grady. "I wouldn't spend the night here for a pile of bluefish."

They were now on the outer beach of the island, having found the inner too marshy for progress. The sands here were firm and hard, and they ran rapidly onward. They were soon at the lower end of the island, and were turning toward the desired internal point when an unexpected obstacle met their eyes.

This was a broad stream of clear water, flowing downward from the interior marsh, and putting a most unwelcome check to their progress.

"Hang it, it was as dry as powder yesterday!" growled Grady. "You can't trust these marshes two days together. There's a four-foot wade we've got to make, Mr. Howard."

This was a decidedly disagreeable necessity to Will Howard. He had had wetting enough that day to satisfy him, and looked down with intense dissatisfaction upon his shrunk habiliments.

"Blast that cur of a Halyard!" he fiercely grumbled. "Wouldn't I like to have him here now."

"Maybe you would. But that won't get us to the city. It's either wade the run, or stay here all night."

"Yes, water's second nature to you. Suppose you tramp across and signal the boats. I'll be shot if I like the notion."

Grady at once obeyed. But even his short colloquy had proved dangerous. The twilight was fast deepening into night. A gloom had already settled upon the low point of the island which rendered a human form nearly undistinguishable from the inlet house.

Unfortunately he had nothing white about him with which to signal. He ran quickly back to obtain Howard's handkerchief. But this occasioned still further delay, and even this white, fluttering flag of truce seemed not to be observed by the boatmen on the opposite shore.

As for calling, that was simply useless. The distance was too great for the human voice to be heard.

By this time Will Howard, having taking off part of his clothes, had managed to cross the run without a further wetting, and joined his disappointed confederate.

But the partial undressing of himself had yielded another effect upon which he had not counted. With the evening gloom the blood-suckers of the marsh, the musketoes, were rising in thousands. Will's bare limbs offered them a tempting harvest. Ere he could clothe himself again he was dancing with pain, as if he had been touched by a thousand points of fire.

And even when clothed his hands, face and neck were exposed to the assaults of his minute but multitudinous foes.

"By all that's good, Grady," he screamed, "I can't stand this. I shall be ruined before morning. Don't you feel them?"

"I've been through that mill too often," said Grady, indifferently. "They like fresh meat best."

"Help me to drive them off!" yelled Will, flinging his arms about like a windmill, as fresh swarms assailed him. "They'll set me crazy."

Grady, with a covert smile, tied Will's handkerchief closely around his neck. He next managed to wind his coat about the poor victim's head so as to leave him bare space for breathing. But Will had been very seriously punished before this was done. And, despite his efforts, enough of his foes found their way through the small opening left to make him very uncomfortable.

"I can't stand this for the night," he groaned. "I shall be a corpse before morning."

"I have some matches here," returned Grady. "But they've been well soaked. I doubt if they'll burn. If we could only strike a fire we'd be all right."

He exposed the matches to the passing breeze to dry them. He had but three or four of them, and it was not safe to run any risks. It was a half-hour ere he ventured to try them, first gathering a mass of dry sea-weed and fragments of wood, the shreds of old wrecks, perhaps.

One, two, they fizzed and went out. The third

kindled, but ere the wood was well lit the wind curled under his sheltering hat, and carried away the spluttering flame.

But a single match remained. Grady picked up a round-bodied sea-shell that lay near him, and struck the match on its interior lip, which was roughened by a thin deposit of coral. Holding the burning wood deep within the cavity until it had got well kindled, he stuffed into the opening a pinch of the dry sea-weed.

It kindled. It flamed up. He buried the shell under his heap of dry fuel, which at once burst into bright flame.

They both sprang to their feet with a cry of delight. The signal was made. It must be seen across the inlet.

Their cry was answered. At the same instant the sound of oars was heard, just off shore. A boat was coming rapidly to their rescue.

In a moment more it was within the circle of light from their bright flame.

"All right," cried a cheering voice. "Come round here out of reach of the surf. We'll have you off in the twink of a cat's foot."

"How did you catch our light so quick?" asked Will. "Were you out fishing?"

"No. We were sent here after you."

"Who by?"

"Fred Halyard. He saw you before dark. But he thought that maybe you'd like to make friends with our Turtle Island musketoes awhile."

The speaker laughed. He had heard from Fred the whole story. Only for Fred, in fact, they would have been left to make a night of it. Not a boatman would have put out to their rescue.

The speaker informed Will Howard of this when he fell to a bitter cursing of his successful antagonist, and advised him, also, to hold his tongue, if he did not wish to spend the night on the island.

This threat effectually silenced him. He became mute and subdued as he entered the boat, too thoroughly quelled to have another word to say.

There was some covert laughter among the boatmen at the inlet house when Will stepped ashore from the rescuing boat, with but a sorry vestige of his former pride of bearing.

His clothes were so shrunk that they clung like an outer skin to his limbs; while his face, from which the shrouding coat had been removed, was puffed out with musketo stings until it seemed double its former size. One eye was nearly closed by the puffed flesh, and the other in a not much better condition.

His hands were similarly swollen, and he walked away with a crestfallen look that gained him no sympathy among the assembled boatmen.

"If Fred hasn't served him out, then 'skeeters can't sing!" cried one of the men, with a laugh of great amusement. "But you were jacks to bring Tim Grady off. We ain't done with sly Tim, yet, let me tell you. If he ain't served out for this business, it's queer."

Meanwhile, Will Howard was sneaking in at the rear entrance to the Mansion House, in hopes to reach his room unseen.

CHAPTER XX.

FRED TAKES THE REINS.

FRED HALYARD was again enjoying the hospitalities of Crockettstown, at the expense of Mr. Proctor; for that village was not in the habit of dispensing its hospitalities without being well paid for them.

On this occasion he took the bull by the horns—as the proverb goes—putting up at the Red Lion Inn, as a guest of the redoubtable Jim Bundy.

He had two reasons for this. First, he did not consider it certain that Bundy would associate him with the custom house officers who had searched his establishment for smuggled goods. To render this less likely he professed to be an agent of a person wishing to go into a real estate enterprise in that part of the State, and who had sent him to see the lay of the land. Secondly, even at the risk of being suspected, he wished to have Jim Bundy under his immediate eye, and also thought it quite possible that he might discover the secret hiding-place, which Mr. Proctor and Harry Bains had failed to find.

The goods had not yet been removed. Of this Fred made sure by a series of guarded inquiries. In fact, the visit of the boy and his companions the previous week had made the rival landlord of the Black Horse suspicious that all was not right at the Red Lion, and with professional jealousy he had kept a close eye upon Jim Bundy's hostelry.

So Fred settled down with a certain measure of content. It was some satisfaction to feel that he was not on a wild-goose chase.

But he had given Jim Bundy too little credit for shrewdness. That individual evidently suspected him, and seemed quietly on his guard against every movement of Fred's; leaving him none of the hoped-for opportunities to investigate the secrets of the Red Lion.

He was also plainly ill at ease, from some other cause, about Fred. He would fix his eyes upon him in a stealthy manner, and with an expression of foggy doubt marking his face, as if he was trying hard to place the boy in some vanished scene of the past. If Fred sat reading on the porch, Jim Bundy would peer from the window for the half-hour at a time, muttering in a low tone to himself, and observing him from every possible point of view.

Something was evidently knocking at the shut door of his lost memory. If that portal should suddenly open, what a flood of down recollections would rush into the new world of his later life!

He was uneasy in Fred's presence, both from distrust of his purpose, and from this strange freak of memory, which made the lad appear to him like one

whom he had known in some former life. He found himself mentally inquiring if his soul had ever inhabited any previous body.

Fred did not fail to notice these stealthy movements of his host. He was as curious in regard to his host as was the latter in respect to himself. Could he but open the doors of that sealed mind, which held in some secret closet the lost story of his own life, the mystery which the boy, with a very natural curiosity, longed to have unfolded.

He took several opportunities to engage Bundy in conversation, in which he led the way back to the past, and skillfully strove to extract from him some details of his previous history.

Nor was his host loth to talk, but his whole life seemed to be embraced in his residence at Crockettstown. Whenever prior times were referred to he would fall into an uncertain, groping, painfully-confused mental state that was pitiable to witness. He appeared like one seeking to make his way in utter darkness through a scene which he had known of old, but could not recall.

Fred spoke of the Monsoon in an indifferent way, as a vessel of which he had heard; meanwhile closely watching the face of his host for the effect of this name.

It was received with a start and a flush of color. Bundy sprang to his feet and rapidly walked the floor.

"Where have I heard that name?" he asked himself, with a whispering utterance. "It's somewhere deep in my brain, but I can't touch it—I can't reach it. And you—you—your face is there with it. I've seen your face—where—is it a ship? a storm?"

Recollection seemed to be struggling to the surface of his mind.

"You cannot remember me," replied Fred. "I was a child on the Monsoon. You and I only were saved from the wreck."

"You!" exclaimed Bundy, starting with surprise. "I have heard that story. Were you the child? Old Tom Halyard took the child."

"I am Fred Halyard, the ocean waif."

Jim Bundy was evidently pleased with this meeting. But the partly-opened door of his old life had closed again. No further recollection came back to him from the past.

These conversations were repeated, but with no better result. Fred's face continued associated in his mind with the name of the Monsoon. But his recollection of the latter was simply a name—he could not give it shape or locality.

Meanwhile Fred did not for a moment intermit his vigilance. Not a movement in the Red Lion which could bear the least suspicious interpretation escaped his keen eyes. He would have liked a chance for a free investigation of the hostelry, for the purpose of seeking the secret receptacle of smuggled goods. But Jim Bundy's distrust was not laid to rest by Fred's continued residence, and he took heed that the lad should have no chance to wander freely about the inn. The host's furtive eyes seemed ubiquitous. There was no escape from their scrutiny.

This was growing monotonous to one of Fred's active temperament. He said to himself that he did not want to spend a lifetime playing hide-and-seek with Bundy's eyesight.

"I've got to make a break somewhere or burst," said Fred.

If he could not examine the Red Lion by day, it might be possible to do so by night. The folks there certainly took some time to sleep. Of course, in any night-time prowling, there was the slight chance of being mistaken for a burglar, and perhaps treated to an errant bullet. Fred touched the handle of a pistol which he had of late been carrying in his pocket.

"There's two can play at that game," he thought. "If it gets to be a life for a life, I don't see that it's right to have all the shooting on one side."

He had now been a week at the Red Lion, spending the greater part of the days in his ostensible business of investigating the real estate in the vicinity. This investigation, however, was largely made from a point of view selected under the spreading branches of an old oak, where, stretched on his back, he was better fixed for laying out plantations in the sky than on the earth.

The night was fine, cool and clear, which Fred selected for his covert prow through the ground-floor and subterranean precincts of the Red Lion. He was provided with a dark lantern, had muffled his shoes in a pair of large stockings, and was ready for his nocturnal adventure, several hours before it would be safe to undertake it.

Boy-like, he concluded to spend the intervening hours in getting a modicum of sleep, convinced, in his own mind, that he would wake up when the proper time came. But he had some warrant for this confidence, his life on the shore having forced him often to waken at untimely hours.

Despite this, however, Fred slept past his intended time. He woke at length with a start. The necessity was working in his mind, like an alarm clock that has been set to strike at a certain hour. But it was not this alone that awoke him. There were certain sounds in the street without, indefinite to his mind at first, but soon manifesting themselves as subdued voices, and the cautious tread of feet. There was also a peculiar gurgling sound, which Fred fancied to resemble the noise made by horses when drinking.

Here was something worth investigating. Whether or not any special caution was exercised, it seemed so to Fred. He felt sure that some clandestine business was at work.

He rose heedfully, and had his hand on the knob of his room door ere it occurred to him that if it was he they were afraid of his door might be watched.

Indeed, it might be possible that, if it were smuggling agents at work, he might be subjected to personal injury.

"If Jim Bundy has got that double-twist eye of his on my door," thought Fred, "I'll have to circumvent him. There are more ways of leaving a room than by the door. These windows, now, are handy."

There were two windows overlooking the nearly flat roof of the porch. This was upheld by several wooden pillars, and extended out about five feet from the house.

Fred lost no time in stepping through his raised window to the porch roof. Along this he made his way to the nearest end, the one overlooking the stable yard. His suspicions were correct. There stood a light wagon, drawn by a single horse. A faint light from the house fell upon the wagon, at the rear of which two men seemed to be busied. At a glance he recognized one of these as his host.

The affair was growing interesting. Fred moved back, with the utmost caution, to the opposite end of the porch. Here he was quite removed from observation by the men he had seen. In an instant, with an agility for which he was somewhat noted, he swung himself over the corner of the roof, and grasped with his feet the round wooden post. It did not take the active lad a minute to get a firm hold of the latter and slide down to the porch.

With undiminished caution Fred sought the other end of the porch, and, under cover of a clump of bushes, made his way to a point not far removed from the wagon. He carefully stooped behind his shelter as he heard voices seemingly approaching from the house. The dim light again shone into the yard, revealing Jim Bundy and a stoutish companion, whom Fred had not seen before. They had certain bundles in their arms, which they carefully arranged in the wagon.

"That finishes," said Bundy. "You had better cover them with your oil-cloth blanket. It might rain."

"That's so," replied the driver. "It is thickening up a little. We'll be on the safe side."

As he spoke he proceeded to spread a large waterproof covering over the packages in his wagon, whose curtains he also drew down and tightly secured.

"There; I think we are safe now from rain, and from prying eyes, too, for that matter."

"How prettily we've sold our spy up-stairs," remarked Bundy, with a low laugh. "Won't I be innocent to-morrow morning? I know the boy thinks he is a very razor for sharpness."

"It might have been better for you if you hadn't been so innocent to-night," muttered Fred.

"I don't owe the chap any thanks for giving me this long night ride," growled the man. "If I were in your place I'd get even with him yet, for his smartness."

"No, no, I don't owe the boy any malice," returned Bundy. "He's a sort of old acquaintance of mine, too, though I can't quite get the hang of how it comes about. Are you all ready now?"

"Yes."

"You had better come in first, and try some hard stuff. You'll find a glass of brandy will be prime backing ag'in the night air."

"Don't keef if I do," returned the man, very readily. "It never hurts a man to warm up his in'ards."

The two returned to the house, closing the door behind them, and shutting out the dim gleam which came from some light within.

What happened during the interval of their absence we will not just here relate. They returned after a few minutes, the driver mounting into his wagon and taking the reins.

"Give my respects to that young gentleman," he said. "I hope he'll have a good night's sleep and pleasant dreams."

"Drive careful," cautioned Bundy. "The fellow might wake."

The driver did so, walking his horse until he had got some distance down the street. Here, turning into a road leading northward, he drove more rapidly, chuckling quietly to himself.

"I've a notion the spy's badly sold," he cogitated. "What these goods are I know no more than the man in the moon. There's something underhand about them, that's certain. But all my business is to fetch them safe into New York, and hold my tongue afterward."

He drove steadily on for two hours. The moon, now in its last quarter, was shining, and lit up the country road. Premonitions of daylight, in fact, now displayed themselves, growing stronger with every minute. Chanticleer was giving his signal of the coming day over all the country round, and a faint rose tinge began to paint the cloudy curtains of the east.

"I hope Brice's will be open," muttered the driver. "This night air is fearful damp. I must warm up somewhere."

The sun just showed his red limb at the horizon when the wagon arrived in front of a low, long inn, about which a man or two were already moving.

"That's clever. I thought they'd be around. Must wet my whistle before I go another step."

He alighted from the wagon, and greeted the men, who followed him into the house.

The driver's whistle must have been a very long or a very dry one, for it took a considerable time to become thoroughly moistened. He would have made better time, perhaps, if he had known all that was going on outside while he was thus occupied within.

Hardly had he left the wagon ere a slight commotion took place in his cargo. The oil-cloth covering slowly lifted, inch by inch, a curly head gradually becoming uncovered. A pair of bright eyes took a keen observation of the general look of things, and

then, slowly and carefully, the form followed the head. It was the figure of Fred Halyard, who had been taking a free ride, coiled away under the oil-cloth covering of the goods.

He looked out heedfully from the front of the wagon. The coast was clear. Without an instant's hesitation Fred grasped the reins, which had been loosely tucked in at the front of the wagon. With a slight hint the horse stepped lightly away.

"Good-by," said Fred, aloud. "Excuse me for not waiting, but I'm in a fearful old hurry to-day. Will call for you on my way back, if I come this road."

A touch with the whip and the horse was off at a rapid pace down the road. Then what Fred had expected happened. A cry of alarm was heard from inside the barroom, and the men came rushing hastily out. The horse seemed to them to have started of his own accord.

"That comes of not hitching your animal," said one of the men to the driver.

But the latter started off at full speed down the road, yelling after the horse, and striving to catch it.

For a full quarter of a mile this chase continued, at the end of which time Fred stuck his head outside the wagon, calling back to the pursuer:

"I wouldn't get out of breath, if I was you. It's a long run from here to York. Best go back and wet your whistle and get a fresh wind."

It was with a curse of deep import that the driver recognized the true position of affairs. He guessed in an instant what had happened. From Bundy's description of the shrewdness of the youthful spy he imagined that the latter had in some way outwitted them.

"I'll be even with you yet, blast you," screamed the driver. "There's better horseflesh in the world than that old tub you've got."

Turning he ran hastily back. Fred, foreseeing his intentions, whipped up his horse, but the animal had something of a load behind him, and was more noted for bottom than speed at the best. He had not got more than a half-mile from the inn ere the driver was upon his track, in a light wagon, drawn by a horse of considerable speed. One of the men from the inn occupied the carriage with the driver.

Fred continued to whip up, hoping to reach some town, or obtain assistance of some kind ere he was overtaken. But the road was here lonely, and ere he had made a mile and a half from the inn the pursuers were immediately behind him.

"Hold up there, you hound!" sung out the wrathful driver. "If you don't want to be whipped within an inch of your life."

"Hallo! stranger, what's up?" replied Fred, checking his horse. "Want to take a ride? I don't care if I do give you a lift, being it's your."

CHAPTER XXI.

AN INTERVIEW.

But we must leave Fred Halyard for awhile in his somewhat critical situation, and return to Beach City, where the movements of certain other friends demand attention.

Mr. Darlington was slowly feeling his way toward a plan for disconcerting Amos Yarnall, whom he so thoroughly despised and hated that the imminent risk of losing his fortune in another direction troubled him less than it would have done. Two strong feelings in the mind must limit each other's strength, and the hope of revenge diminished the dread of loss.

He had heard of the incident recorded in a former chapter, of the loss of a vessel called the Monsoon, and of the knowledge of it possessed by the sailor, Jack Bunce. It was principally through Mr. Darlington's wishes that the handsome tar remained at Beach City, enjoying being made a lion of, and closeted in long interviews with his rich patron, who, in consequence of these interviews, sent out certain letters in quest of some desirable information.

Amos Yarnall was on needles during these days. He did not dare to act. The peculiar indifference shown him by Mr. Darlington, and the apparition of the familiar face which he had lately seen in conversation with the latter person, made him pause in his movements. He was too shrewd to act rashly. He must first learn more about this boy. But the latter had somehow disappeared. Yarnall sought the city for him in vain.

It was during this period that Mr. Darlington was honored by a visit from Will Howard, of whom he had seen nothing for several days. The fact was that Will had been keeping very close quarters. His face was in no very presentable condition, and he preferred to keep to himself the little adventure which he had experienced on Turtle Island. It was an incident which would not tell very well in his autobiography.

His retirement, in fact, made a less ripple in the circle of his friends than was quite complimentary. Rose Darlington was rather pleased than otherwise with his absence, betrothed as they were. The fact is that Will's behavior had been anything but agreeable to her of late, and a change was coming over the spirit of her dreams. It might be, also, that other thoughts had intruded themselves into her mind. Her engagement with Will Howard had been more a question of management between the old folks than of love between the young folks. It had been assented to on her part from lack of any heart-pull in other directions. But she was not quite so sure now that she was heart-free.

Not that she took any cold-blooded and mathematical view of the case, but simply that a hardness of feeling toward her betrothed, and a softness of sentiment in another direction, had taken involuntary possession of her mind.

As for Will Howard, the truth is that he did not

love anybody very ardently but himself, and he had not the skill possessed by some very ordinary folks in concealing this fact.

But he had no idea of losing Rose Darlington. She was the only daughter of a very wealthy man, which was, to him, a feature of the case of very great importance.

It was for this reason that he asked for an interview with Mr. Darlington as soon as he was sure that his face had grown presentable. He felt that he had shown the cloven foot too freely to his betrothed. He must try and retrace his lost ground.

"I ought to have been looking you up, Will," observed Mr. Darlington. "But I have been very much occupied, and I did not fancy that you were seriously under the weather. Got a little too much sun-scorched, did you not?"

"Something of that kind," replied Will, whose face had regained its normal condition. "There are some days here in which the sun does burn furiously. I am all right now, though."

"I perceive that," returned Mr. Darlington.

"I wished to see you," continued Will, with a slight hesitation, "in regard to Rosa. I fancy we are both old enough to marry."

"I imagine so," rejoined Mr. Darlington, mentally deciding that Will was looking rather too old for his years.

"But I cannot get her to see it in that light. She continues to put off the period of our marriage—I do not see why. There is no reason why we should delay it for months or years yet. I wish you would use your influence with Rosa in this matter. She is unpleasantly indifferent about it."

"Why certainly, Will," replied Mr. Darlington. "Not that I am in the habit of using my influence with Rosa, in anything that may affect her happiness. But, if you wish it, I shall certainly speak to her."

"I would be greatly obliged," said Will. "I think we are waiting ridiculously long."

The young man was fearing, that there might be a slip between the cup and the lip, of his hopes.

"There is one thing which I should mention to you in this connection," said Mr. Darlington, hesitatingly. "It is not a pleasant subject to me, but it is no more than just. You will keep what I say a secret, Will?"

"Certainly," replied Will, with an unpleasant mental start. What could this ominous beginning mean?

"I wish you to rest under no wrong impression in regard to my wealth," continued Mr. Darlington. "My property came to me by will, you may know. But there are other claimants who have lately appeared. If their claims are made good, Will, which I very much fear they may be, I shall have to commence life over again."

Will sat in open-mouthed surprise. He could not muster a word in reply.

"I feel it my duty to acquaint you with this," resumed Mr. Darlington. "It is between you and me, you know. Of course, it is of no vital importance to you. You have wealth enough of your own. And when I give you Rosa I give you a fortune."

"Certainly, certainly!" exclaimed Will, with forced enthusiasm. "Of course Rosa is worth millions in herself. But you did give me a start, Mr. Darlington."

The start, indeed, was so great that Will Howard did not recover from its effects during the remainder of this interview, which he brought to an end as soon as he politely could.

Mr. Darlington looked after him curiously as he walked away.

"It is an experiment worth trying," he murmured, shaking his head. "I fear Will Howard's faith will not stand the fire. I have mistrusted him for some time, and I begin to think that his defection will not break Rosa's heart. We shall soon see if I have misjudged him."

CHAPTER XXII.

A SLIGHT SURPRISE.

We left Fred Halyard in a somewhat critical situation. He had just answered the imperious demand of the driver to stop, with a response full of cool assurance, but which enraged that individual still more.

"Get out of there, you infernal young thief!" he yelled. "Blame you, you shall find that it is not a trifling matter to steal a man's horse and wagon. Get out, I say!"

"Don't make so much noise about it, now," replied Fred, in a tone of disgust. "I thought you wanted a lift, or I wouldn't have stopped. There's no use to raise the roof off the fields about nothing."

"Listen to the insolent young hound," said the driver to his companion. "By all that's good, he shall be lodged in jail for this. Will you take him back and hand him over, as a thief?"

"I think not," was the decided reply. "I am not in that line."

"Then, by thunder, I'll take him myself, if you will not. Help me tie the slippery villain."

He had leaped on the shafts and caught Fred by the arm. The latter sat docilely, without the slightest effort to escape.

"I wouldn't be bothered with the young rascal, if I were you," replied the driver's comrade. "He ought to be punished, to be sure. Let's tie him to the fence here and leave him. He will have two or three hours to reflect on his sins before any early traveler is astray on this road."

"Agreed," cried the driver. "And shoot me if I won't give him a horsewhip dance to boot. Come! out with you, jackanapes!"

"Don't think I'll get out just now," drawled Fred. "It's comfortable here."

"You won't, hey?" exclaimed the portly driver

tugging at the boy's arm. "I'll know the reason why you won't."

"I'll tell you the reason—if that's all you want to know," returned Fred, in his provokingly cool tone. "Maybe I'd best whisper it, though. There are some things sound better in a whisper."

The angry driver seemed to suddenly come to the same conclusion as Fred. There was that in the boy's manner that admonished him to caution.

He bent his ear, into which Fred said something in a whisper. Whatever it was, it brought about an immediate change of base.

"And will you go quietly with me?" he asked Fred, as if to cover his sudden change of intention.

"I haven't said anything against it, as I know of," replied the boy, with an injured air. "I told you I'd give you a lift, from the first time you called me."

"I won't keep you any longer," said the driver to his companion. "The boy agrees to go quietly with me. I am much obliged for your help in catching the runaway. I'll take care of this chap."

"It looks as if he would take care of you," mentally responded the other, as he glanced at Fred's provokingly cool face. "He's got a ring of some kind in your nose, that's sure."

In a minute more they were driving away from each other, the wagon with Fred and his captor jogging at a dog-trot along the road.

"Oh, yes, if you want to drive I'd just as lieve," said Fred, handing the reins to the driver who had reached out for them.

The lad snuggled down very comfortably beside his captor, as if perfectly satisfied with the state of affairs.

"I supposed you didn't want me to tell that chap all that was behind us here," remarked Fred, pointing with his thumb over his left shoulder. "There's some things that folks don't want everybody to know."

"There's nothing wrong with what's there," growled the driver.

"Did I say there was?" asked Fred, with affected indignation. "You'd best wait till I say there's something wrong. But I had a sort of notion that you didn't want that country gawk to know your business."

"That's so. I didn't want to have him bothered with your blathering tongue."

"I knew it," said Fred, laughing as if it was a great joke. "That's why I whispered. I hope he did not suspect there was anything wrong—there, you know," with a flirt backward of his thumb, and a sly look.

"Blast your eyes, you young villain, I'll mash your head if you keep on at that string!" exclaimed the driver, in a sudden rage. "I'm not done with you yet, by a jugful."

But s'pose I took a notion to jump out of the wagon and run across the fields?" queried Fred. "That nag of yours couldn't follow me across fences, you know."

"A bullet could," returned the driver, with a savage intonation, as he significantly touched a pocket in the rear portion of his pantaloons.

"No, thank you. I ain't going to run no race with bullets," said Fred, laughing.

The driver looked at his young companion as if he was at a loss just what to make of him. Fred was as cool and unconcerned as if they were driving together to a picnic.

"See here," the driver suddenly cried, "how came you aboard my wagon? And how do you know so much about it? I never saw you before."

"Well, ain't I good-looking enough to go alone?" retorted Fred. "I tell you what it is, I've had a longer ride with you than you think. I'm all the way from Crockettstown this morning."

"The blazes you are!"

The driver let fall his reins and gazed at Fred in sheer astonishment.

"Oh, yes! I didn't walk either. If your old nag had spoke up he might have told you that he had more load on him than was bargained for."

"Do you mean that you were in the wagon?" asked the surprised driver.

"Yes. Under that oil-cloth. Why, bless you, man, I've been waiting a week at the Red Lion for Jim Bundy to send away these goods, and I wasn't going to let them slide out without me. That's not the kind of peanut I am."

The driver still sat with the reins fallen, and his hands listless on his knees. His eyes were fixed on Fred as if he fancied he had discovered a new species of animal. He was utterly dumbfounded.

"Well, if this ain't a high old sell!" he gasped out. "This is Jim Bundy's spy!"

"Yes. I heard him call me that," said Fred, laughing. "When you and him went in for that nip, you know."

The driver could have struck the boy in the face for his cool insolence. Fred looked as innocent and self-possessed as if it was his daily vocation to tell men how neatly he had outwitted them. With both hands thrust in his pockets he commenced to whistle, as if he thought some music would relieve the tedium of their journey.

It was five minutes before the driver spoke, his eyes all that time fixed wonderingly on Fred. He seemed as if he was trying to make out the species of this new animal. The horse jogged on quietly, free from any interference with the reins.

"Well, you're a coon, if there ever was one," he at length ejaculated. "Only it's my turn now."

"Why, yes," said Fred. "It looks that way. Things will turn round, you know. Of course as long as a fellow knows how to whisper he's all right. Somehow I don't feel half as scared as I ought to."

The driver continued to observe this strange being

for a minute more. Then, giving vent to a fierce oath, in which he expressed a multitude of emotions, he took up the reins again and turned his attention to his horse. He had all the information that he cared for from Fred.

For a full half-hour they continued onward in perfect silence, so far as speech was concerned, though Fred kept up a low whistling accompaniment to their journey, or perhaps to quiet the nerves of his companion.

The sun was now getting well up in the sky. The day had fairly set in. On the fresh morning breeze came a very evident whiff of salt air. Their road had, in fact, been at an angle toward the ocean, and from the point which they had now reached Beach City was not more than six or eight miles distant. From this point the road diverged more inland.

But just ahead of them a side road appeared which led directly toward the sea. It was the continuation of the causeway to Beach City.

They were just opposite this when Fred suddenly grasped the reins, and brought the horse to a dead halt.

"You were going the wrong way," he cried. "This is your road."

"You seem to know a blamed lot about it," returned the driver, with an oath. "Just you take my advice, young man, and keep quiet, if you don't want to get into trouble."

"But this is your road," persisted Fred.

"I don't think it is then," retorted the driver, starting the horse on again.

"But you will only have to turn back!" remonstrated Fred. "What's the use of going wrong when you're told?"

"You are very ready with your reasons," said the driver, surprised at this persistence. "What is your reason for wanting to take that road?"

"Of course I've got a reason," returned Fred, drawing one hand from his pocket. "I think it's a mighty convincing reason too."

The driver agreed with him when he turned round and saw that Fred's hand held a pistol, aimed point-blank at his head.

"It's my dad's old revolver," explained Fred. "He was afeared I might get into trouble, you see, and thought I'd best take along the shooting-iron."

"Hang you! lower that barrel!" screamed the alarmed driver, dodging from Fred's aim.

"Now don't you make me nervous," returned Fred. "You never saw anything go off easier than this old revolver. If a fellow gets nervous there's no telling what might happen."

"Lower it, I say!" yelled the driver.

"Just suppose you turn the horse round," replied Fred. "I told you that you were in the wrong road, but you wouldn't listen to reason. Best be quick about it, too, for my finger's getting twitchy."

With a quick movement the driver threw himself back out of the range of the weapon, and put his hand in his own pistol-pocket. A look of blank amazement came upon his face on discovering that it was empty.

"Feeling for your pistol?" asked Fred. "Why, I could have told you it wasn't there. You told me about it, you know; and I was afeared you might hurt yourself carrying pistols in that careless way. So I just took it out. Here it is," continued the boy, withdrawing his other hand from his pocket.

The same instant the alarmed driver found himself covered with a brace of revolvers.

"There's another reason that the other road's the right one," said the boy, with a look of cool energy in his eye. "Two reasons are always better than one. And this left finger of mine always was twitchy. Maybe you'd best turn back, now. It wouldn't be nice if one of these shooting-irons was to go off."

The frightened driver seemed to be of the same opinion. He hastened to turn the horse in the road, and to take the side road to the sea.

"I'm glad you've come to the same opinion with me," remarked Fred, dropping his hands on his knees, but keeping a firm grasp on his weapons. "I live down at Beach City, you see, and dad would be nervous if I went further away from home. That's why I wanted you to drive me down this way."

The driver looked askance at the dangerous weapons. He did not fail to perceive that Fred kept a firm grasp upon them. It was, evidently, prudent to keep in the present road. But his emotions were too deep for utterance. To be sold in this manner by a boy! He would have choked him, if he had dared. But he could see the steel of determination within the quiet innocence of Fred's words, and concluded that it was wisest to act the philosopher, and drive on.

It was about nine o'clock that morning when the wagon with its two occupants halted in front of the Center House, at Beach City, at which establishment Mr. Proctor boarded. That gentleman, in fact, was standing on the porch of the hotel when the wagon drove up, and saw with surprise that one of its occupants was his young agent, Fred Halyard.

"There," exclaimed Fred, springing to the ground, "here is somebody for you to take care of, Mr. Proctor. He takes cold mighty easy, so I'd advise you to keep him out of the draft."

"But, what have you in the wagon?"

"Some dry-goods from the Red Lion," answered Fred, a reply which was enigmatical to everybody but Mr. Proctor.

"And now," said Fred, to the driver, "I think I'd best give this shooting-iron back to dad. I've been fearful afraid it might go off with that twitchy finger of mine. And that wouldn't have been a bit healthy for you, you know."

CHAPTER XXIII.

CUT OFF BY THE SEA.

PICNICKING upon the beach is not a very exciting amusement, yet a party, including several of our friends, were having a very jolly time, on a shady afternoon in these latter days of August.

They had driven down in the morning to a point some five miles below Beach City, where was a broad, smooth expanse of the hardest of sands, bringing their dinners in sundry baskets and kettles, and bound to have a good time generally.

And a good time they had, if laughter and jollity be any gauge of enjoyment.

But there was a special reason for their having selected this part of the beach in preference to any other. For the ostensible object of the picnic party was the gathering of sea-shells, and other spoil of the ocean, and this portion of the sands was famous for its wealth in the curiously-wrought and painted dwellings built for themselves by the cousins of the oyster and the clam.

The majority of the picnickers, however, soon got a surfeit of this business, and applied themselves to the more attractive sport of singing and chatting, game-playing and general jollification.

Some few continued the shell-hunt with more assiduity, baskets swinging on their arms as they walked along the yellow sands, now picking up a pebble of more than usual brilliancy, now a prettily-colored shell.

Rose Darlington and Will Howard were among these persistent shell-hunters. She had a strong love for nature, in its every form, and enjoyed this ramble on the firm sands, with its frequent discoveries. Now a translucent, oddly-shaped jelly-fish lay stranded upon the beach, now a bunch of delicate sea-weed, now the shell of some queer little crab. And the peculiar tilting motions of the sand-snipes, the swoop of the white-winged gulls, the occasional leap of a porpoise beyond the ever-roaring breakers, lent an animation to the scene, and proved to Rose an unending attraction.

It was not so with her companion. He grumbled more than a little at her ridiculous devotion to science, as he called it, and seemed to envy the sport of those whose gay laughter came freshly to his ears.

"I say, Rose, haven't you got a load?" he asked, grumblingly. "This fun is near about used up."

"I want to take a look down this way," she replied, indicating a spit of sand which was out off from the general beach by a long, shallow pool of clear water, which filled a trough dug in the inner sands by some former tide.

"I like to walk on the very edge of the waters," she continued. "And there may have been something of interest brought in by the last tide."

"All right," returned Will. "But I hope you won't mind if I take a rest here till you come back. I'm tired enough for two. And I'm not raving fond of your shells, you know."

"Very well," said Rose, with a slight curl of the lip. "I will take the sea with me for company."

She crossed the depression in the sands by which the waters of the last tide had run out from the pool, and walked on down the narrow stretch of sand. This widened as she advanced, the sand-hills here setting back from the beach, and leaving a broad flat reach, whose depressed inner portion was a broad expanse of water.

Time fled unnoticed as she walked on, too deeply interested in the sea spoil at her feet, and in adding to the store of treasures in her basket, to pay heed to the encroachments of the sea. Perhaps an hour and a half had passed in this unthinking amusement ere she noticed that the pool was again approaching the sea, until only a narrow spit of sand afforded her footing. It was, indeed, becoming difficult to escape the stronger breakers, some of which appeared eager to pour their waters across the sands into the pool. This latter, too, was deeper here than where she had entered.

"I think it is the longest pool that I have ever noticed on the beach," she said to herself. "And it is getting so narrow here that I wish I was at its upper end. I shall have wet feet yet from some of those strong breakers."

She now hurried onward, paying no further attention to the shells. She could see the extremity of the pool, at no great distance in advance. At her quickened pace she was not long in reaching this point, but to her dismay she discovered that a narrow channel here made connection between the pool and the ocean. Every wave sent a surge of foaming water up this channel, which was more than three feet deep. Rose stopped, and looked around her with dilated eyes.

It might have seemed that there was nothing for it but to return to the point at which she had entered, but there were significant indications which made her involuntarily nervous.

She knew enough of the habits of the ocean to now put another interpretation upon the narrowing of the sand spit and the deepening of the pool. The tide was rising. At a glance she now recognized this fact. Every few minutes some great breaker flung its seething waters to a higher level than had been before attained.

It had been rising ever since she had entered upon that narrow strip of beach. Yet the neck by which she entered was even then almost at the sea level. Would it not be overflowed long ere she could reach it? Would not this whole strip of beach be washed and drowned by the incoming tide?

Accusing herself of foolish thoughtfulness in this heedless venture, Rose turned to hasten back over her course. She went not now as she had come, with a slow, devious walk, but straight forward, and as swiftly as her feet could carry her. And none too quickly, for the breakers had already conquered

the resistance of her causeway. Again and again an overtopping monster of a fellow dashed clear across the stretch of sand, and poured his waters into the pool beyond. Rose was forced to pause on a higher knoll until the forces of the waters were again drawn off, and she could run dry shod over the spot late captive to the waves.

These necessary delays were vexatious in her extremity. The tide seemed to be rising with rapidity, and it was important to reach the inner beach as quickly as possible if she wished to escape a very disagreeable situation.

She, indeed, found it expedient to not wait until all the waters of these higher waves had run off. She dashed through the rippling play of some of them, managing to keep her clothes from harm, though her shoes were soaked with salt water.

The point desired was at length attained. Rose stopped in new dismay. It was as she had feared. The sea had overflooded the channel—dug it out, even, to a greater depth than before—and a space of dark water, twenty feet wide and whose depth it was difficult to guess as the bottom was not visible, lay between her and safety.

Here was a dilemma. Rose had no idea of a wade through this wide stream, up which every successive wave sent a gurgling flood.

The others were too far off to notice her dilemma. Will, however, was still where she had left him, stretched at full length on the sands, and—watchful guardian as he was—fast asleep.

Rose's cry brought him to his feet with an instant awakening.

"Hallo!" he cried, in momentary confusion. "What's gone wrong?" In a moment he had taken in the girl's unpleasant situation. "By Jove, Rose," he ejaculated, "here's fun! I told you how it would be, going off on that ridiculous expedition. And how are you ever going to get out of it without a wade?"

"I don't know," replied Rose, with a piteous look at her dress, a favorite which she was very loth to have spoiled with sea water. "A wade won't hurt you, Will, and you might carry me across."

"That's blamed thin," exclaimed Will, looking in his turn at his dainty garb. He could not forget a wade he had lately experienced. "I don't see any use of two of us getting soaked. The water is not very deep. You can easily wade across at this point."

The tears came to Rose's eyes.

"The time was, Will, when I thought you would go through fire for me. Now you will not go through a foot or two of water. Very well, sir, I can cross without your aid."

"But one's got to be wet anyhow," persisted Will, "and I don't see a ghost of use in two being soaked."

Rose's lip quivered as she strove to keep back the tears, which would rise at this exhibition of his cold-hearted selfishness. She was about to step into the water, which had been deepening even during this colloquy, when a loud cry caused her to pause.

"Hold! I will be there in a moment!" came the cry again, in a well-known tone.

In another instant a lithe, slender form dashed by the hesitating lover and into the water, then foaming with the impulse of a wave. In a moment more the channel was passed, and Rose saw by her side the active frame and flushed, handsome face of Fred Halyard.

"This is too bad, Miss Darlington," he breathlessly cried. "How came you here?"

"By my own folly," she answered.

"You must be got off at once. In ten minutes more there will not be a foot of dry sand here to stand on. But you can't wade that stream?"

"I don't want to," she replied, with a look of dismay. "But I presume I shall have to. It serves me right for being so thoughtless."

"If you will permit me, Miss Darlington," he said, hesitatingly. "You are not heavy, I know. And I am strong. I should hate to see you in that water."

She, too, hesitated, with a certain confusion in her mind, for which the occasion hardly gave warrant.

She had asked Will Howard to carry her across. Why this feeling of bashful hesitation with Fred Halyard?

She turned at length to him with a smile that masked a modest confusion.

"I am heavier than you think, Mr. Halyard. I fear that you would find me too great a weight."

Fred replied by clasping her in his strong arms. He could not hesitate longer after this invitation.

"Why, you are but a feather's weight," he said, as he set foot into the running water.

But never feather made a man's heart beat as that light burden did Fred's. A sense of delicious joy stole through him, giving a new warmth to every muscle and nerve. He could have spent the day in crossing the stream, with that rare burden in his arms.

And she, too, seemed not free from something of the same feeling, for her heart throbbed warmly, and a color stole into her cheeks that justified her name.

Will Howard stood in sullen anger awaiting their arrival. He had again been chided by the unselfishness of this boating lad, this waif of the beach.

Nor did he feel more comfortable for Rose's ironical greeting.

"I thank you, Mr. Howard, for your devotion. But, I hope I shall have no need to call on your services soon, again."

"I suppose not," he angrily replied, "so long as you have this sand-lubber always at your elbow. I think I had best leave him to take care of you, since you have become so very intimate."

With this sneering reply, he turned on his heel and

walked away. He had not taken many steps, however, ere Fred's hand was on his arm, and Fred's voice at his ear.

"I have had about enough of this from you," came in a fierce whisper. "You shall answer me for these insults. I have not forgotten your effort to murder me."

Ere the slower-witted Will could reply, Fred was back again by Rose's side. Her face was pale. She looked eagerly into his face.

"I hope there is no quarrel between you," she said. "I should not wish any quarrel on my account."

"There is no quarrel," Fred gravely replied. "I hardly think he is worth quarreling with."

They slowly walked, side by side, toward the carriages, which were about a half-mile off from the scene of this adventure.

Few words passed between them. But, in their frame of mind, every word was full of deeper meaning. Their steps grew slower and slower as they approached the picnic ground. To both it seemed almost a sacrilege when the light laughter of the pleasure-seekers broke upon their intense feelings.

Fred left her as they came near. He feared to compromise her in some way by his presence.

But, Will Howard hastened to take his place. He spoke to her, in a low, bitter tone.

"I shall no longer stand in your way," he said. "I have learned from your father that he and you are beggars. The Howards do not wed with beggars."

CHAPTER XXIV.

A GLIMPSE INTO THE PAST.

THE season at Beach City was near its end. Already the annual August storm—"the reed-bird storm," as it is called on the Delaware—had come and gone, and had had its usual effect of depleting the watering-places of many of their gay birds of passage.

Only the relics of the season remained, those who knew from past experience that warm weeks would follow this August chill, and who had no special reason for a hasty flight back to the city.

Among these were our friends, Mr. Darlington and his daughter, Will Howard, and others who have appeared in our pages. Among the latter were Jack Bunce, the handsome sailor, and Amos Yarnall and his son, the rescued passengers.

August had indeed fairly vanished. It was its last day on whose morning Fred Halyard rescued Rose Darlington from her unpleasant position—the day succeeding that in which he had driven into town with his enforced captive.

On the following morning Amos Yarnall, who had been in constant search for a week past for Fred Halyard, met that young gentleman, seated in a ship's chair on the narrow strip of green sward in front of his adopted father's residence. Old Tom sat beside him, a short pipe in his mouth, from which the smoke curled upward in wreaths which threatened to envelop him in their vapory softness.

"There's some 'at satisf'yn' about a good pipe," remarked the old man, with a sigh of pleasure. "I've seed'd the time more 'an once when a whiff of 'baccy smoke was worth— Eh? Did you speak, sir?"

This to Amos Yarnall, who had just stopped. This gentleman withdrew his eyes with a seeming effort from their fixed stare at Fred's face, a look which our young friend did not altogether relish.

"I only gave you the good-morning," replied Mr. Yarnall. "You have a pretty place here."

"Rayther, rayther," returned old Tom, with a gratified look. "The sile ain't the best goin', but I'm a bit proud o' my grass."

"You have reason," said Mr. Yarnall, leaning heavily upon the fence. "Beach City is rather barren, as a whole."

"Aren't you the gentleman as come ashore in the Triton?" asked old Tom.

"Yes, sir. That was one of my life experiences. I have made more than one narrow escape in my time."

"There's nothin' wuss than a wreck," was old Tom's positive reply. "A man's nerves and muscles are precious little use when the sea gets on a rampage. He's got to trust then to chance and Providence—eh, Fred?"

"I must walk down to the Center House," remarked Fred. "I have a slight matter of business there."

"All right, all right, boy. Take the lad's seat, Mr. Yarnall—that is if you don't mind having a bit of chat."

"A likely young man that," responded Mr. Yarnall, nodding his head after Fred. "I've noticed him before. Is he your son, sir?"

"He calls me father," returned old Tom, with a smile of pride. "If I wanted to sail under false colors I s'pose I might safely claim him."

"You are not his father, then?"

"He's a son o' the sea, Fred is. A bit of flotsam. But he's been mine a most since afore he could talk, so I reckon I'll hang on to him."

"Did he come ashore in a wreck?" asked Mr. Yarnall, eagerly.

"Yes. Fifteen years ago come next January. Lucky for him he fell into old Tom Halyard's keepin'. I've taught him some 'at worth a man's knowin'."

"What was the name of the vessel?" queried Mr. Yarnall, with eager interest.

"Nobody knows. She went into chips. And her crew was looked up in the depths of the sea, and their secrets buried with them. Only a single soul come ashore along with Fred, and the greedy sea washed his memory clean out of him."

A smile of pallid satisfaction slid over Mr. Yarnall's white face. If this was the boy on whom Darlington

depended to defeat him, it would perhaps prove a trust in a broken stick.

He eagerly continued his questions, and old Tom, nothing loth, entered into the full details of the wreck and rescue, incited thereto by the intense interest of his auditor.

"What vessel it was is one of the mysteries that'll never be found out," concluded Tom. "We've a hint of a smuggler as come ashore about that time; but nothing to show that the boy was aboard the smuggler. This seems to be a bad bit of coast for smugglers. Here's the Triton now, with her brains dashed out."

"Smugglers?" ejaculated Mr. Yarnall, with a surprise that was mingled with some deeper feeling.

"Yes. Haven't you heered what all Beach City knows, that she landed some contraband stuffs a night or two afore she come ashore?"

"I heard of the smuggling," replied Mr. Yarnall, with the same peculiar look. "But I did not hear that it was ascribed to the Triton."

"You will hear of it, then, if you live many days longer. There's likely to be some questions asked. The thieves were cute, but the honest folks were cuter. The contraband stuffs are in the hands of the customs this blessed minute."

Mr. Yarnall's pallor deepened.

"How is it that I have not heard of it?" he asked. "Must have shet your ears," was the reply. "It's leakin' out everywhere. A whole wagon-load's been nabbed, and the driver's enjoyin' hisself behind a set o' good iron bars."

Strangely Mr. Yarnall was as deeply interested in this information as in that concerning Fred Halyard. It seemed to be an hour of not very pleasant surprises to him, though old Tom, in his spirit of garrulous chat, had failed to notice his visitor's imperfectly-concealed emotion.

But he could not help observing something odd in Mr. Yarnall's reception of the news about the smuggling.

"I wonder if he was mixed in it?" the old man asked himself, after his visitor had left. "He was aboard the Triton. He mought 'a' been one of the contrabandists."

Mr. Yarnall walked quickly on through the main street of Beach City.

"I must see that Jim Bundy without delay," he muttered. "His memory may have returned. If so his tongue must be locked. It would be ruinous if that boy could be identified as George Bruce's son."

But he had, just now, other business in hand of more pressing importance. Hastening to the telegraph office he addressed a carefully-worded dispatch to J. W. Tompkins, Son & Co., of lower Broadway, New York.

As to the purport of the dispatch the telegraph operator knew nothing. It was written in a sort of cipher, which seemed at first sight plain English, but which was utterly empty of meaning on any effort at connected reading.

But Tompkins & Co. had no difficulty in arriving at its significance, which, in fact, proved somewhat alarming to that honest and reputable firm.

They hastened to send a cable dispatch to Liverpool, with instructions to stop the sailing of the ship Mary Ann until further advice.

Their telegram came too late. With very little delay the following return message was delivered into their hands:

"Ship Mary Ann, Carstairs commanding, cleared yesterday. Went to sea last night, and is beyond our reach."

There was no help for it. The new smuggling venture could not be stopped.

While Mr. Yarnall was thus engaged, and old Tom Halyard was doing all the injury he could to the pecuniary prospects of his adopted son, through his thoughtless garrulity, others of our characters were working in Fred's favor. Mr. Darlington, that same morning, had taken the accommodation train for Philadelphia, accompanied by the sailor, Jack Bunce.

This, however, was not a final departure. Rose remained behind, in hostage for his speedy return. And his taking the accommodation instead of the express looked as if his destination was some way station.

Such proved to be the case. He and the sailor left the cars at Crockettstown. Evidently Jim Bundy was the ulterior object of this journey.

They proceeded, however, with something of the same circumspection which Fred had shown on a similar occasion. Instead of going directly to the Red Lion they made their way to the Black Horse. Here the rival landlord was questioned closely as to the mental condition of his opponent in business.

He had no hesitation in telling all he knew—was rather eager than otherwise—but what he knew proved very discouraging to the purposes of his visitors. Jim Bundy had, now and then, shown slight symptoms of remembrance of his former life. But he had never recollected anything of importance. And, generally, it was all completely lost to him.

His village crony, Tony Pike, might know something. He had hobbled over many a glass of half-and-half with Bundy; and when a man's head is afloat in good ale sometimes his brain loosens up as well as his tongue.

"I'll interduce you to Tony, if you care, gentlemen. But what's up? There's been several sets of folks this way after Jim Bundy lately."

"There is something in Bundy's past life that would be worth buying, if it could be come at," said Mr. Darlington. "We had best go at once to the Red Lion. But if you will ask the man you speak of to step down that way, it might be worth his trouble."

"Certainly, certainly!" replied the landlord, eagerly. He was very willing to oblige this gentleman who had ordered such a good dinner from him.

Mr. Darlington and Jack Bunce proceeded together to the Red Lion.

Agreeably to their previous arrangement Jack kept in the background on entering the bar-room of that hostelry, leaving Mr. Darlington to do the talking. He enounced himself behind a newspaper in a corner of the room, which was then only tenanted by the landlord.

"Can I have a few minutes' private conversation with you?" asked Mr. Darlington.

The landlord slightly changed color. The news of the capture of the contraband goods had but lately reached Crockettstown, in its outflow from its center at Beach City. He was naturally nervous on being addressed in this way by a stranger. He took a second look at the tall fellow with the sailor cap, in the corner. But Jack was too completely hidden behind his paper shield to be made out.

Mr. Darlington's first questions were of a reassuring nature. It was an entirely different matter about which he was concerned. As to the events of his former life Jim Bundy would have been willing enough to have given information, if he had been able. He had often sought earnestly to recall them to himself.

"If a fellow could be born thirty or forty years old," he remarked, "I'd have said that I was born just before I came to this town. For the life I went through before is as dead as a stone. I hope there weren't nothing in it to be ashamed of."

"What I want you have no reason to be ashamed of," said Mr. Darlington. "It would be worth your while if you could give me the name of the vessel in which you were wrecked. Do you recall the name of a ship called the Monsoon?"

"I don't know," said Bundy, doubtfully. "That word sometimes comes into my head. So do other words. But they are only floating words. I can't place them. I wish I could."

They were interrupted at this moment by the entrance of a slim, somewhat seedy-looking customer, with a well-blossomed nose, and a general look about him of the consummate bar-room loafer.

"Won't you leave us alone now, Tony?" asked the landlord, with scant courtesy. "We're about a matter of business."

"Is this Tony Pike?" asked Mr. Darlington.

"Yes, sir; yes, sir," eagerly replied the intruder. "Sit down then. I sent for you. I think he may help us out, Mr. Bundy."

"I doubt that," replied Bundy.

"You and Mr. Bundy have often had confidential talks?" asked Mr. Darlington of the new-comer.

"Often and often, sir. More times nor I could mention."

"And has he ever spoken of things that happened before he came to this place?"

Tony looked to the landlord, as if for a cue.

"Go on," said the latter. "If you know anything, let it out."

"I've heered him say somethin' 'bout a smug—"

"No, no, belay that!" cried the landlord, hastily.

"Have I said anything about a ship called the Monsoon?"

Tony hesitated, and seemed disinclined to speak.

"Guess I ain't heered nothing," he at length said.

"Was not the Monsoon a smuggler?" asked Mr. Darlington, looking him sternly in the face. "Come; it won't hurt Mr. Bundy, and it will help you, to let it out."

"He was only a sailor. He hadn't nothing to do with the smugglin'," returned Tony. "But he did say once that he'd sailed on the Monsoon, and that the forecabin hands had odd notions 'bout her cargo."

"Do you remember it now?" asked Mr. Darlington, turning quickly to the landlord. "Do you remember a passenger named George Bruce?"

"Bruce!" cried the landlord, with a slight start. "Bruce! There was a lad here lately—a tall, good-looking, bright lad—somehow I seem to fix the name Bruce to him—it was he that was wrecked with me in the—"

He paused—hesitated—it was gone. He had been on the very point of naming the wreck.

"Do you know me?" came in a clear, loud voice from his right.

Jim Bundy turned with a start. Mr. Darlington's companion had dropped his paper and stood before him—a tall, vigorous, bronzed man, with "sailor" written on every angle of his form.

The landlord looked for a moment, with startled eyes, into the face before him. He then fell back a step as if he had seen a ghost.

"It's Jack Bunce, or I never reefed a topsail!" came in a half-whisper from his lips.

"You're right there, old sea-horse," roared Jack, as if in a gale of wind. "And, in spite of the false colors you're sailing under, you're Ned Thompson, or you're nobody—Slim Ned, as we used to call you."

A cry came from the landlord's lips, a cry in which a thousand emotions seemed to mingle. He pressed his hands to his head, as if for fear it would burst with its rush of recollection.

"It's coming back! It's coming back!" he exclaimed. "Jack Bunce—Slim Ned—we sailed together in the old Canton, under Cap Carstairs—Handsome George, they called him."

"And you left the Canton to ship in—"

"In the Monsoon! In the Monsoon! I see it all now! It is like a map spread before me! We had a good run across the Atlantic. But we ventured too near the coast. We were wrecked. I can see the old raft drifting ashore, spite of sail and anchor. We had a passenger—George Bruce—and his son, a baby—and the child came ashore—I see it! I see it now!"

Mr. Darlington had been rapidly making note of these somewhat incoherent remarks. Further questions elicited but little more; the cloud seemed again settling. Hastily the questioner got him to sign this statement as his recollection should be again gone. Getting the two others to witness it, he carefully put it away in his note-book.

"We are on the track," he said. "The Monsoon did sail from Liverpool, fifteen years ago last December. George Bruce and his son were on the passenger list—the only passengers, in fact. Nothing further was ever heard of her—the fact is, no very strict inquiry was made. The owners were satisfied with their insurance. No one made any earnest effort to seek George Bruce." A flush came into his face as he said this. "That the vessel wrecked on this coast in January of that winter was the Monsoon there can be no doubt. The shipping list is in existence. I must learn if Edward Thompson was among her crew."

When Mr. Darlington sought the cars that afternoon, he left Jack Bunce behind him. The lost memory of the landlord might be still further restored. As he stepped into the train, he saw on the platform, just landed from an opposite train, the white face of Amos Yarnall.

CHAPTER XXV.

A BOY'S LOVE.

AMOS YARNALL had a very different result from his visit to the Red Lion than that which had attended Mr. Darlington's inquiry. The cloud had again descended upon Jim Bundy's mind, not a fragment of information could be drawn from that closed closet of memory.

The landlord, however, was playing shy in his answers to this new visitor. He had been warned of a possible inquiry from this quarter, and advised against satisfying these inquiries. Mr. Darlington wished to keep Yarnall in the dark as much as possible.

The truth was that the sudden appearance of Jack Bunce had aroused Bundy's dormant memory—not fully, but to a certain extent, and the new-gained recollections had not really escaped him again. His lack of ability to answer Mr. Yarnall's questions was, therefore, more assumed than real, a fact which the latter was shrewd enough to perceive. He had, indeed, seen Mr. Darlington at the same moment in which that gentleman had seen him. He had, moreover, caught a glimpse of Jack Bunce on the porch of the Red Lion. And he was sufficiently versed in the art of putting that and that together, to guess that some plan to checkmate him was afoot.

There was no doubt that this adopted son of Tom Halyard was the person with whom Mr. Darlington was seeking to counteract his claim. There began to be a little doubt in his mind that this lad was really the son of George Bunce. Yarnall was not slow to perceive the pointing of the finger of necessity. Fred Halyard was the peril in his path. The life of that youth stood between him and fortune. Dark thoughts began to float like shadows through the mind of the evil-souled schemer.

Meanwhile, time moved on at Beach City. The summer boarders had gone in mass back to their city homes. Many of the large hotels had closed for lack of customers. Only those whose leisure was abundant, and who fully recognized the fact that the first two weeks of September are often among the sultriest of the summer, lingered at the shore.

"That's a thundering fine haul you made, Fred," said Mr. Proctor, to our young friend. "A wagon load of silks and satins is not to be sneezed at."

"Hardly a wagon load," answered Fred.

"There's a clever show, anyhow. And very valuable goods. It would not pay these chaps to smuggle cheap materials."

"But, have you heard of the Mary Ann? Has she sailed?"

"Yes. She cleared the evening of the day in which you captured the goods. The rogues on this side could not have had wind of our capture in time to stop her sailing."

"What next, then?" asked Fred. "Are you not going to nab Jim Bundy and the fisherman as accomplices?"

"Not yet. That would only be giving the cue to the head villains. I want the Mary Ann's cargo of contraband first. And I would like to catch that captain and mate in the act. Then we will be ready to descend on Tompkins & Co. like a thunder-cloud."

"She should be in soon," remarked Fred. "We have had easterly winds these two weeks. She ought to make a quick run."

"Any time after this day week," replied Mr. Proctor. "We must not be thrown as we were at the last landing. I intend to take post on the ridge back of the marsh, and to have a signal guard on duty all night through."

"That's the ticket!" exclaimed Fred. "And I will not shut my eyes when the time comes. Would it not be best to arrest the fisherman as soon as the signal is given and answered, and take his boat out yourselves?"

"No. There may be other answers to the signal besides the one by lights. These fellows are too smart to be caught napping. The best we can do is to follow into the inlet, and cut our friend off in his return. Then, if there is a second boat-load from the smuggler, we might put in an appearance ourselves."

"There is sweet promise of a fight," said the lad, rubbing his hands in pleasant anticipation. "Cap Carstairs and that black-browed mate won't give up at a song. I'd like to have a hand in the fun."

"There is not much fun goes on here that you don't have a hand in," laughed Mr. Proctor. "But keep quiet about this business, my boy."

"Quiet as an oyster," returned Fred.

It was the afternoon of that same day that our young friend met Rose Darlington, on his return from an errand down the beach. Fred was dressed in his best, and it was wonderful how well good clothes became him. Those used to roughing it are usually awkward and uneasy in any costume approaching the fashionable cut, but such was not the case with the youth on whom Rose now fixed her eyes in involuntary admiration. Had he passed his life as a gentleman of leisure he could not have displayed more grace and ease in his well-cut and well-fitting costume. And his slender, graceful, athletic form, the clustering hair which escaped from under his light straw hat, and his bronzed but handsome and intelligent face, were in strange contrast to the awkward, heavy-built and somewhat loutish manner of many of the young men of Beach City. Rose found herself involuntarily admiring his appearance, and wondering whence he obtained his grace of manner and cultured address.

For Fred knew well how to put on fine manners with fine clothes. He was well educated, considering the contracted advantages of Beach City, and though he often fell into the vernacular of his ordinary companions, he could speak with address and polish when it became advisable. This probably had much to do with the attraction which he had exercised on his young lady friends.

"I have gathered some shells for you, Miss Darlington, as I know how fond you are of this sea-spill," he said, as he approached her.

"That is very kind," she gratefully replied. "I have had very bad fortune this morning. Please let me see them."

She opened her little basket, which she usually carried on her shell-hunting expeditions, ready to receive these contributions from her more active friend.

"I was over on the island yesterday," said the lad. "There are fewer shell-hunters there, and the last storm threw things up freely. I gathered up some of the best."

He emptied his pockets into the open basket. Rose hastily picked up one of these shells, a beautifully coiled and colored specimen. A smile came upon her face as she looked at it.

"The idea of such color on our drab coast!" she exclaimed. "This is decidedly tropical, Mr. Halyard. Now where did you get it? There is nothing like it in any of the Beach City shell stores."

"No, indeed; I got it on the coast," he laughingly replied.

"But not on the sands. I know our shells too well for that."

"You are too learned for me, that is very evident," he returned, with a merry laugh. "That shell came from the East India seas. I had it from a sailor on a passing vessel."

"And you thought of me!" she gratefully cried. "Now I am ever so much obliged. It is a rare beauty. It is a harp shell, Mr. Halyard—though I presume you know that—and one of the rarest species. I shall value that as your gift to my slender cabinet."

"I only wish it had been of more value. I should have been doubly happy to give it to you," he earnestly rejoined.

"It has value, in my eyes, both for its own worth, and as your gift," she warmly answered. "You are putting me under such hosts of obligations, Mr. Halyard. After saving my life twice—"

"Once only," he corrected.

"You saved me from a very disagreeable wetting, at any rate. And who knows—that stream might have been too much for my strength. But in your care—" she looked admiringly at his athletic grace. "I certainly did not find you very heavy," he replied, "and was only sorry for one thing."

"And what was that?"

"That the stream was not three times as wide."

Rose blushed and turned her head half aside. But there was a secret pleasure in her face as if she found the implied compliment not at all disagreeable.

"I fear you would have found Mr. Howard a very poor dependence in your dilemma."

Her lip curled with disdain.

"Mr. Howard and I are friends no longer," she said.

A quick light came into Fred's eyes.

"He spoke to you rudely that day," he returned.

"I did not hear his words, but his tone was very evident."

"Shall I tell you what he said?" she asked, some strange emotion overflowing her face.

"No, no. That would seem too much like my prying into what does no concern me."

"I will keep it no secret from you, Mr. Halyard. I know I can trust you. He told me that my father and I were beggars, and that the Howards did not wed with beggars."

A flush of indignation marked her face as she spoke, which seemed to Fred to double her fresh young beauty. His own face flushed and warmed. Not with anger only—there was some deeper feeling underlying that of indignation.

"The coward!" he muttered. "You are well rid of him. But what did he mean by your being a beggar?"

"It is true. My father has told me. There is a claimant to his property. He fears—he knows that he will lose all. He will have to begin life over again. It is true, Mr. Halyard. I am a beggar."

"You are not, and never can be!" exclaimed Fred. "There was never any news—hard as it may be to you—that was sweeter to my ears. You have fallen to my level in fortune. You are rid of your engagement to that selfish coward. I may speak. I may tell you that I love you—have ever loved you."

I loved you when I first saw you--when I was little more than a child, and looked up to you as a flower looks up to its star. I love you now that I am nearly a man--that I have a man's heart and hopes. You will forgive me, Rose, for speaking so. It may be a boy's enthusiasm--but it is a boy's faith, a boy's hope, a boy's love--and they will not fade, but grow warmer and deeper when manhood comes to me."

During this warm, passionate outburst, in which the whole soul of the speaker seemed to flow out upon his voice, and in which his frame swayed toward her as if irresistibly driven by attraction, Rose stood pale and silent. But ere he ceased a flush relieved her pallor, a rosy hue which overspread her face as from a light within. She, too, seemed swayed toward him, her lips trembled, her hands were involuntarily extended.

"Do not say that I have sinned beyond redemption," he cried, after a momentary pause, in which she had made no response. "Do not say that I have insulted you--a poor waif like me. I would never have dared to speak but that you told me you were reduced to my own level in fortune. In worth you are yet far above my level."

"Not so," she cried, in reply. "I am but a butterfly of fashion--you a true-souled and courageous man."

Fred caught her extended hands, the warm light of hope burning in his eyes. He drew her unresistingly toward him.

"We are but boy and girl yet," he said, in a whispering tone. "But we will be man and woman. I love you and will make myself worthy of you. Say that I love not quite in vain. Say that you will wait for me. Have I your answer, Rose?"

"Yes," she softly replied, yielding to his gentle force, as his hand slipped round her slender waist, his love-impressed eyes looked down into her moist and lashed orbs.

CHAPTER XXVI. AN UNEVEN FIGHT.

A WEEK and more had passed since the date of our last chapter. It was growing late in September. Summer had fairly vanished, and the chill of autumn was in the air, but still some scant visitors lingered at the shore.

Rose Darlington seemed in no hurry to return home, and her indulgent father consented to prolong his visit. He, in fact, had the same object in view as herself. That object was Fred Halyard. But it was Fred Halyard considered from very different points of view.

Will Howard was still at the shore, occupying his time in gunning and fishing, and keeping but scant intercourse with Mr. Darlington, none at all with his daughter. This was not altogether Will's fault, for Rose would have nothing to do with him.

The young man had repented somewhat of his hasty words on the day of the picnic, and would willingly have withdrawn from the position in which they had placed him. But it is often much easier to get into a scrape than to get out of it, as he now found to his cost. And as he did not fail to observe a certain intercourse between Rose and Fred Halyard his exasperation against that youth was redoubled.

Fred thus had two bitter enemies in Beach City--the second being Amos Yarnall, who was far the most dangerous foe, as being more ruthless and utterly unsuspected. And from certain interviews between these two persons it seemed probable that they had discovered this mutual feeling.

Trouble of which he did not dream was evidently concocting for Fred Halyard. When he rowed Amos Yarnall up the inlet, one September afternoon, on a fishing excursion, he never imagined that he had in his boat his most deadly foe.

Yet if he had witnessed the close conference between the two conspirators that morning, or had noticed the care which Yarnall took to have the boat start from an unobserved point, he might not have been so mentally at ease.

As it was he rowed with a mind free from anxiety to the desired fishing-grounds, which were three or four miles up the inlet. Here the boat was anchored, and his passenger set to fishing in an easy, careless sort of way that was not likely to very soon empty the ocean of its finny inhabitants.

"You will not catch many unless you are more wide awake," remarked Fred. "They are here--plenty of them. But they don't come up to any man's whistle. I will show you how we coasters can coax them from the water."

Fred was preparing his own lines as he spoke. He now threw them in, and soon justified his boast by hauling up fish after fish, while yet Mr. Yarnall had not succeeded in getting one to the surface.

The fish were numerous and various in kind, and bit at the bait with an avidity that required little skill in the sportsman. Weakfish, sea-trout and bluefish were drawn up in abundance, and even a specimen or two of that rare epicurean dish the sheepshead graced Fred's skill with the lines. Even the amateur, Mr. Yarnall, began to catch some fish under his instructions. As night approached their boat showed very favorable results of the day's sport in the large number of fish which covered its bottom, their finny brightness shining like silver in the slant rays of the declining sun.

"I think we have done very well," said Mr. Yarnall, looking complacently at their treasures. "I fancy that I can set up a fine boast in Beach City of my skill as a fisherman, if you don't spoil it by telling the truth too openly."

"You can have all the credit," returned Fred, laughingly. "I don't need to begin now to make my reputation as a fisherman. Folks there know that I am sure death to fish."

"Then they had best not know that you were with me," replied Mr. Yarnall, "or I will get very little credit for my day's work. Fortunately there have been no boats about here this afternoon."

"There comes one now," remarked Fred, pointing down the inlet.

Mr. Yarnall looked in the direction indicated. A quick gleam flashed across his face as he caught sight of a small boat, rowed by a single oarsman, about a quarter of a mile distant.

"Let us go up this channel," he remarked to Fred. "We can let him pass without seeing us."

The channel indicated was a narrow passage which the sea had cut across Turtle Island; very contracted inwardly, but opening into a wide mouth on its seaward side. It really cut the island into two distinct divisions.

A few sweeps of Fred's oars sent the boat up this channel, where a bend near its entrance effectually concealed the fishermen from observation.

But they were not going to make so easy an escape. After a few minutes the sound of oars became quite audible, and it soon became evident that the coming boat was turning into the same passage. A few more strokes and it shot round the curve and moved up beside theirs.

Fred looked up in surprise at this unexpected movement. It was with deeper surprise, and a flush of indignation, that he saw the occupant of the intruding boat. The latter was no other than his foe, Will Howard.

Fred's eyes rested on his face with a steady and rather fierce scrutiny which seemed to somewhat disconcert Will.

"Well, sir," remarked Fred, "one would think that you were anxious to see me, since you have taken the trouble to follow me in here."

"You don't give me a fair chance to see you on the beach," replied Will. "After your challenge to a meeting I thought you had heart enough to keep to it like a man; and not to squirm out of my way, and force me to follow you up in this manner."

"I do not remember taking any special trouble to avoid you," replied Fred, with a scornful curl of the lip. "Or to meet you either, for that matter. I hardly think you are worth the trouble."

"Coward!" cried Will, fiercely. "You dare not meet me on solid ground." He sprang ashore to the hard sand bordering the stream. "This is no rocking boat, where you have a double advantage. We will have it out here, if you do not want to be proclaimed a cowardly cur through all Beach City."

"I am not very much afraid of you," replied Fred, with a cool look that still further angered his antagonist, "either of your tongue or of your fists."

"You are a liar and a coward!" exclaimed Will, fiercely. "An insulter of woman and a cur before men. I wish to Heaven I had brought a horsewhip so that I could give you the chastisement such a dog deserves."

"Don't trouble yourself to get in too great a rage. It is bad for the digestion," returned Fred as he quietly rose, and stepped from the boat. "I did not intend to soil my hands with you. But, as you are so very eager, and as I remember that I promised you the whipping you deserve--"

He did not finish, for his infuriated antagonist at this instant aimed a fierce blow at him which Fred only avoided by a quick stoop. He returned the compliment by catching Will by the shoulder, ere he recovered from the impulse of the blow, and, with a quick trip, laying him at full length, prostrate on the sands.

Fred slipped off his coat and flung it on the ground. "You will see that it is a fair fight, Mr. Yarnall," he asked.

"Certainly," replied that individual, catching up an oar and helping himself from the boat with it. There was a hidden gleam in his eye that looked bad for Fred, if he could get an unseen advantage of him.

But Will was up and at him again, like a maddened animal. He was a trained boxer, and took care, now, to avoid the danger which his impetuosity had led him into before. He had, in this, the advantage of Fred, who knew but little of boxing, but who made up by alertness and activity for the skill of his antagonist.

For full five minutes the fight went on without a fair blow being gained by either party, and with no effect, except a degree of weariness, the result of their vigorous exertions.

"I do not see that you are making any very active headway," said Fred, tauntingly. "I fancied you professed boxers could settle a greenhorn like me in no time."

Will Howard was growing too furious to have the expected advantage of his cool foe. He answered this last taunt by a rush and a grapple, with the purpose of ending in a hand-to-hand struggle what he could not in a stand-up fight.

Amos Yarnall had been standing at a short distance, resting upon his oar. He now came nearer, as he saw them struggling in a fierce wrestle. Will Howard's rage had given his foe the exact opportunity he wished. If no boxer, Fred Halyard was the best wrestler on the coast. Howard, too, had some experience at wrestling, and was much the heavier and stronger of the two, so that Fred found him a tougher antagonist than he had expected.

Up and down the sands they staggered, clasped in a strained embrace, lifting, bending, tripping, now the one, now the other, having the best of it, but both still keeping their feet.

For a moment Will Howard gained an advantage, forcing his foe back step after step. Fred sought vigorously to recover, and had braced his right foot firmly on a hard knoll of sand, when he felt the foot suddenly kicked from under him. It was Amos

Yarnall, who had taken the mean chance to trip him at this critical instant.

Fred staggered backward, dragging his antagonist with him. But, even as he fell, he played an old wrestler's trick of his on Will Howard, which quite turned the tables. Flinging his left foot backward he gained a moment's leverage on the sand, and, in that instant, with a quick twist, the position of the wrestlers was reversed. They fell heavily together on the narrow beach, Will Howard under and Fred on top.

With a low laugh of triumph the victor lifted his head, and shook the clustering hair out of his eyes. He looked down in the dark face beneath him, contracted with the rage of defeat, but with a gleam in the eyes whose cause Fred could not perceive.

It was but an instant of triumph. It was followed by a whistling sound and a loud crash. A feeling ran through Fred's nerves as if a rock had fallen with crushing force upon his brain. Then his senses vanished, his grasp relaxed, he rolled over and over on the sands with the impulse given by Will Howard's effort to rise.

And there stood Amos Yarnall with lifted oar, as if ready for another blow. It was the butt of the oar which had fallen on Fred's head, seemingly with force enough to crush in his skull.

The two villains looked at each other, and then at the insensible and bleeding form, with dilated eyes. Amos Yarnall took a step forward and again raised the oar. His arm was grasped by Will.

"Would you murder him?" the latter hissed, through his closed teeth. "It is satisfaction we want, not murder. I doubt if you have not done for him already."

He involuntarily trembled as he looked into Fred's white face, and noted the slow red stream that was painting the sands a dreadful crimson.

Amos Yarnall looked at Will for a moment--a steady, unblenching look.

"So it is not murder you want?" he queried, with a strange light in his eyes.

"No! A thousand times no! By Heaven, if you have killed him--"

"Don't get excited now, he is only stunned," returned the cool villain. "I may have hit a little harder than I intended, but he will come to before a half-hour. And he is losing no blood to hurt. We had better leave him to make his way off the island, as he left you once."

"That's so," said Will, with a momentary return of fury at the recollection.

"And there go the boats--floating out into the inlet," Mr. Yarnall suddenly cried. "After them quick, or we may be left on the island ourselves."

The water was setting through the channel, and had carried the boats so far that they were barely in time to overtake them.

"Let us tow his boat out and set it adrift," said Amos. "No one knows that I am out with him, so I am safe on that point if anything goes wrong. It will be dark before we get to the city, and the boat will hardly be discovered before morning, so that he is good for a night on the island."

"Hadm't we best examine him further?" asked Will. "He may be hurt worse than you think."

"No, he is not. It is only a scalp wound. I am doctor enough to see that. And let me tell you that it is dangerous for you and me to remain here. It would be awkward to be seen."

Yielding to this somewhat two-sided reasoning, Will took up his oars and commenced to row out into the inlet, dragging Fred's empty boat.

He did not notice that Yarnall's words had shown a belief in Fred's death. Nor had he observed, in his excitement, a fact which his villainous companion was very thoroughly aware of.

This was that Fred lay not two feet from the water's edge, on a piece of gently-sloping sand, his head nearest the water. And this with a rising tide, which, in half an hour, would overflow the spot where he lay. Amos Yarnall had good secret reason in his haste to get his less villainous companion away from that locality. There was every reason to believe that the water would finish what the oar had only partly accomplished.

Indeed, had they remained, they would have seen the water slowly, silently, encroaching upon the sands, inch by inch. It reaches and laps Fred's disheveled hair. It touches his head, lapping the bleeding wound. It slowly deepens, crawling up inch by inch. Half his body is submerged. His ears are buried beneath the rising tide. It has reached his chin. It is flowing over his eyes. Only his mouth and nostrils are free from the insidious, creeping waters. Now it washes his closed lips. Two minutes more of this rapid swell and his nostrils will be closed, his breath cut off, death come upon him with the loss of the breath of life!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

IN TURTLE ISLAND THOROUGHFARE.

HAD the occurrences of our last chapter taken place later they might have been interfered with from another source than the boats of stray fishermen. For as soon as night fell a long, narrow boat put out from the inlet back of Beach City, manned by six stout oarsmen, and an equally stout coxswain, who was no other than our old friend, Harry Bains.

For a week now they had been nightly patrolling the inlet, between Turtle Island and the swamps. The Mary Ann, with her contraband goods, might be looked for at any moment, and they were determined to be not cheated of their prey as they had been on a former occasion.

This patrol was supplemented by a signal-guard on the high lands back of the swamp. From the inlet it would have been impossible to see the lights of a vessel beyond the island. A guard was there

fore placed in a house on the mainland, from whose upper windows a clear view of any passing sail was visible.

The boat of the patrol moved slowly up and down the inlet. Keeping to its center to avoid the pest of the mosquitoes, and rowing with a long, easy stroke, just sufficient to keep the craft in motion and the men awake.

Hour after hour passed in this eventless and tiresome task. It was past twelve o'clock when Harry, with a sweep of the helm, brought the boat's prow around, and headed her again down the inlet.

"We are getting rather too far up," he remarked. "If there's any attempt I've a notion it will be made lower down—probably at the thoroughfare. That will be their easiest passage."

"Except they come in at the inlet entrance, as they did last," said one of the rowers.

"Which they won't. It was too close a shave then for them. And we happen to have a chart of their plans this time."

"I wish to mercy they'd run in soon then," ejaculated another of the men. "Patrol duty ain't the best fun in the world. I hope they're not going to cheat us of our natural sleep for half a lifetime."

"Cheat you!" exclaimed a third. "Why I'm blessed if you didn't sleep a straight eight hours to-day. We didn't wake you up for dinner because we thought it a shame to cheat you of your snooze."

A laugh followed at the expense of the sleeper, who grumbled out:

"Plague take your dinner! I made it up at supper, as Joe, here, can witness. And I wouldn't give a farthing for all the daylight sleep ever invented."

"I don't know about that," replied Joe, "but I can witness that you ate enough supper to satisfy any reasonable man for a week."

The renewed laugh at this testimony was suddenly stopped by a low, whistling sound, which came across the water from the swamp.

Every voice was hushed, and the oars held suspended. Again it came, three notes, in a falling cadence.

Harry Bains answered, with the same signal. The next instant the sound of oars met their ears, and a small boat, rowed by a single oarsman, was visible emerging from the gloomy borders of the swamp, and rapidly approaching.

"Is it you, Tim?" called Harry, in a guarded tone.

"Ay, ay!" came in the same cautious utterance.

"Ready and anxious for work?" asked the rower, as the small boat forged up beside the large one.

"Yes. What is up?"

"The signal has been shown off the coast. Three lights in a triangle. It was answered by Bill Bates, the fisherman, with the same signal, which you might have seen if your eyes had been wide open."

"We trusted to your eyes for that," rejoined Harry.

"Well, Bates is off. I saw him safe on the water, and then made for my own boat. I had some trouble to find you, so he has had plenty of time to reach the inlet."

"Lay to, lads!" cried Harry, with sudden vehemence. "We will make for the thoroughfare. If that is where they are to meet we will cut off our friend on his return. And I only hope the captain and mate will row in with him. I'd like amazingly to nab them sharp coons."

In twenty minutes they were off the mouth of the thoroughfare, patrolling on the marsh side, in the shadows of the long grass. Their boat could not have been seen at twenty feet distance, in the dim light of the stars.

Tim rowed across to the island side, where he brought his boat to rest in full view of the mouth of the passage, though himself concealed from easy observation. It was the same channel by whose side Fred Halyard had been left to the slow influx of the tide.

From his position he could hear sounds which appeared to come from the middle of the island. Low, dragging sounds and subdued voices.

For another twenty minutes the patient vigil continued, and then the dip of oars became audible. The prow of a large boat emerged from the mouth of the channel before the eyes of the patient guard.

In a moment more the whole boat was visible, setting in the water as if heavily loaded, and rowed by three men. Tim let it get well out into the open water, and then cautiously followed, with a noiseless stroke of his oars.

He could but faintly see them through the shadowy gloom. They had almost reached the dark shelter of the marsh grass, when Tim gave the same signal he had before given, three low whistles. To his utter surprise he heard it repeated, as if by an echo from the island side.

Inwardly it was answered in a different mode. There was a quick fall of oars, the shooting of a large boat from under the shade of the bank, the locking of the two boats side by side.

It had been so quickly and skillfully performed that the men in the fisherman's boat had not recovered from their surprise at the signal whistle when the prow of a heavy boat raked up their port bank of oars.

Tim, at his distance, could but just see what followed—the sudden upleaping of a number of phantom-like forms, a whirling and whirling of these figures, and then a sudden disappearance as if they were all crouched down in the boats. An oath, an ejaculation, a cry followed, but these were instantly suppressed.

Tim rowed hastily up.

"What luck?" he asked.

"Nabbed," came in the voice of Harry Bains. "A regular piece of machine work. There they are, with hard wood to chew on. And a glorious boat-load of the contraband."

"Will we make for the city?" asked Tim.

"No. I doubt if this is all. We shall have to question our friend Bates."

The gag was taken from the fisherman's mouth, but he sullenly refused to answer any questions, either as to whether there was more goods to come in, or as to any signal by which the smugglers could be deceived. Harry offered him his liberty if he would tell on his confederates, but not a word could be got from him.

"Best look his jaw again," exclaimed one of the men, impatiently. "These other chaps look like sailors. We might learn something by pumping them."

"Hold!" cried Tim, with a sudden recollection. "Wait for me. I will be back in ten minutes."

He rowed off hastily across the inlet. He had just remembered the reply, from the island, to his whistle. It might mean something of importance.

The others waited in restless impatience for his return. They could not imagine his object. But the ten minutes were not up ere the sound of oars was again audible, and his boat slowly emerged from the gloom—this time with two occupants.

"Who in thunder have you there?" asked Harry, in deep surprise.

"Only a night-hawk, who has been at fly-catching on Turtle Island," came in the well-known voice of Fred Halyard.

As the boat came alongside he stepped into the larger craft of the patrol.

"I thought you might be wanting your spare coxswain," he said.

"What in the blazes does this mean, Fred?" asked Harry. "How came you on the island?"

"It is a long story," replied the lad, "which this is not the time to tell. I can give you this much of it, though. Two friends of mine tried a little game of murder on me, and if they'd hit ten ounces harder I am afraid it would have been the last of Fred Halyard."

"Murder!" cried Harry. "You are not joking, boy?"

"I don't think this cut is a joke," replied Fred, touching his matted hair. "They left the tide to finish their work, but their calculation wasn't just up to the mark. I was breathing the water into my nose before I came to. But as cold water didn't agree with my lungs it brought me to my senses in a jiffy. I crawled up into the bushes and laid there till my strength came back to me again."

"Well if this ain't a sweet go!" ejaculated Harry, with a whistle of astonishment. "Do you know anything of the business we are on?"

"You bet I do. Why it all came off not ten feet from me. The boat from the Mary Ann will be back inside of half an hour with another load of contraband goods."

"That's the ticket!" cried Harry, jubilantly.

"You're a brick, Fred."

"The captain and mate of the Triton are aboard. They don't trust this delicate business to the sailors. There's a signal; but I've nabbed it."

"To your oars, lads," exclaimed Harry. "You stay here, Tim, and watch our prisoners. Knock them in the head if they are obstreperous. Lay to, now. You're a perfect brick, Fred."

In their inward passage Fred unfolded his plan. This was to ambush the smugglers, only three remaining aboard the boat, while the others should hide in the bushes, ready to spring up at a given word.

All this was performed ere the smugglers' boat returned with its second cargo. The craft of the coast-guard lay, with its three occupants, awaiting their approach.

A password was called out from the approaching boat, and answered by Fred, when they dashed confidently in.

"You are spry," called out the voice of Captain Carstairs. "I did not look for you so soon."

"Yes, willing hands and ready oars, you know, Cap."

By this time the boats were almost touching.

"Hallo!" cried the captain. "Whose voice is that?"

"Only a night-hawk's cry," came the loud answer.

It was the signal agreed upon. In an instant the men concealed in the bushes were on their feet and dashing for the smugglers' boat. They were as quickly seconded by the occupants of the patrol boat.

The surprise was complete. In less than a minute the three sailors who occupied the boat were overcome and secured, while the captain and mate had their hands much fuller of work than they had bargained for.

The captain was dragged backward by two stalwart assailants, and his arms bound behind him ere he could make any fair effort at self-defense. The mate, however, was more fortunate. He knocked down his first foe by a blow from his iron-like fist. The next instant he had drawn a pistol, and was menacing the assailants.

"This for you!" he yelled, pulling the trigger on Harry Bains.

But ere the pistol could be discharged his aim was disconcerted by a fierce blow which fell upon his head and hurled him forward into the mass of his foes. In an instant more he was secured beyond the chance of a struggle.

"I owed you one," exclaimed Fred, flinging down the tiller by which he had produced this sudden change in affairs. "And I thought it a good time to pay it now, and save Harry Bains from the clip of a pistol ball."

"You're just the biggest brick going!" cried Harry, grasping his hand. "I owe you one now."

"And if we haven't made a pull to-night, lads, then there's no mosquitoes on Turtle Island—which there is, a plenty," he continued. "I'm afraid the Mary Ann will have to run into port without her

head officers, except they call round our way for them. Ready, lads?"

"Ay, ay!"

"Then give way."

In very few minutes more the procession of captured and captors was moving down the inlet, toward Beach City.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A CONFESSION SWEET.

A WEEK or two has passed since the date of our last chapter, a period rather fruitful in important results to several of our characters. Captain Carstairs and Miller, his mate, Bates, the fisherman, and half a dozen of the crew of the Mary Ann, are in prison on the charge of defrauding the revenue. Their employers, Messrs. Tompkins, Son & Co., are also in the hands of the law, being free upon bail to answer for their misdeeds, on the principle that the big fish can swim, while the little fish must be kept safely under lock and key.

Jim Bundy is also in what we may call a tight place, though he has a fair prospect of being released on bail, under the auspices of some of the thirsty folks of Crockettstown. We may offer this in evidence that there is some gain in selling good ale.

As for the Mary Ann, she lay off and on the coast on the night of the capture, in despair at the loss of her officers. The crew, of course, were not without suspicion of the nature of this enterprise, and not without conjectures as to what had befallen their commander. But the orders were to await their return, which was accordingly done.

With fair daybreak a boat put off and came out to her, manned by four of the coast-guard, with Fred Halyard in command. Young as he was he knew how to handle a vessel, which could be said of none of the others, except Harry Bains. But the latter had his hands full just now in Beach City, so that Fred, despite his wound, and a dizziness yet remaining from it, was appointed to take charge of the Mary Ann, and bring her into New York harbor.

Meanwhile Amos Yarnall and his son were about prepared to leave Beach City. The former was quite satisfied that Mr. Darlington's defiance was but bravado, since he certainly could place no trust in the lapsed memory of Jim Bundy, and had no other evidence. And as he showed no signs of yielding to the demand of Mr. Yarnall, the latter had about concluded to bring suit for the recovery of the estate, being convinced that no strong defense could be made.

He had another reason for this action. He had every right to believe that the heir on whom Mr. Darlington depended to checkmate him was no longer in the way. His operations of the previous day had certainly given him reason to believe that this obstacle was removed; and it struck him that it might be the part of prudence to leave Beach City without delay, as some unpleasant discovery might possibly be made. He had not the most remote idea that, at that very moment, Fred Halyard, alive and strong, was giving orders to make sail on the Mary Ann and head her for New York and a harbor—which was certainly much better than to be "food for fishes."

There was much excited talk at the dépôt, as he was waiting for car time to arrive. With eager interest he mingled with one of the conversing groups anxious to learn the cause of this unusual excitement—a little fearful, also, in his inmost soul.

"It was the neatest job that was ever put up in these diggings," declared one enthusiastic individual. "And they say the haul is worth thousands. All the finest French silks."

"What is that?" asked Mr. Yarnall.

Here was an opportunity—a person ignorant of the news. There was a fine chance to repeat the whole exciting story.

Mr. Yarnall soon learned of the capture of a party of smugglers during the preceding night, with some astonishing particulars of the fight in which they were captured. These particulars, in fact, lost no piquancy from the slight circumstance that they had never occurred. This, really, only left more scope for the imagination in their description.

"Who is the boy of whom you have several times spoken?" asked Mr. Yarnall, somewhat nervously.

"You are making him a very prominent character." "Didn't I tell you? Why, it was Fred Halyard, one of our own Beach City stock. Some devils tried to murder him last night on the islands, but Fred is too tough built to be easy—What is the matter, sir? Are you sick?"

"Only a momentary dizziness," returned Mr. Yarnall. "I must have got up too early this morning. It always makes me giddy. I am obliged to you for your story, but I think I shall have to take a seat in the car."

"One moment," remarked a stern-faced man, who had just come up. "Is not your name Amos Yarnall?"

"That is my name," was the reply, given with outward boldness but inward dread.

"Then you are my prisoner."

"For what?" demanded Mr. Yarnall, with well-assumed astonishment.

"For assault and battery, with intent to kill, on Frederick Halyard. Your accomplice has just been arrested, and I should advise you to come quietly along, if you wish to avoid trouble."

Yarnall looked nervously around, with trembling lips and a face yet more pallid than its normal state. He did not at all like the aspect of the faces about him. And there were words of threat very audible to his senses. The excitable narrator who had just been telling him of the capture of the smugglers was especially indignant.

"I'll be shot if this ain't a neat go!" he exclaimed. "Playing with me as if I was a toad and he was a harrow. The infernal milk-faced murderer! By

blazes, boys, let's put him through the same course of sprouts that he put poor Fred Halyard. I'll be one to give him a touch of Jersey justice."

This was a firebrand thrown into a powder-magazine. In an instant there was a surge toward the officer and his prisoner. Fortunately for the captive there was but the one group of watermen on the platform. The others consisted principally of guests, hotel men, etc., who were not likely to second any lawless movement. The alert officer hastened to remove his prisoner before this feeling could spread, being well aware of the rapid growth of disorder. In less than an hour Amos Yarnall found himself locked up in prison instead of on his way to Philadelphia. The same prison held Will Howard, it being not considered best to give them a hearing until the excitement had subsided.

Mr. Darlington was exceedingly interested in these events. They had, in fact, more personal bearing on his own affairs than at first sight would have appeared. For Jack Bunce was back in Beach City with some interesting information. This went to show that Amos Yarnall had been wrong in his deductions concerning Jim Bundy. The latter's lost memory, under Jack's coaching, had really returned to a considerable extent, all the prominent events of his previous life being again in his memory.

And among the recollections which he had divulged to Jack was one of prime importance. This was that Jake Miller, the mate of the Triton, had been appointed mate of the Monsoon, and had been removed at the last minute for other duty. He knew well all the crew of the wrecked vessel, and would be able to identify the wreck with the Monsoon from his knowledge of the fact that Bundy had been one of her crew.

It was, in short, his accidental discovery of an old shipmate, Ned Thompson, now sailing under the name of Jim Bundy in the Crockettstown Hotel, which had first revealed the true fate of the Monsoon. It was a circumstance, however, in which his employers felt little interest, as they had long since been paid the insurance on that lost craft, and they had heard nothing of the rescued infant.

But Miller knew quite enough of the antecedents of Ned Thompson to know that he could be trusted in a delicate affair then on hand. It was feared that the hiding-place for contraband goods at the cottage of Bates the fisherman was likely to become suspected. A similar hiding-place was, therefore, prepared at the Red Lion, in which the smuggled goods could be more safely concealed until it was convenient to remove them to New York. Such was the origin of conditions which gave rise to several interesting circumstances which we have already detailed.

Rose Darlington, in these days, was in unusually good spirits. So much so, indeed, as to excite the surprise of her father. She had heard, with indignation, of the dastardly attempt on Fred's life. But as the news came to her conjoined with the knowledge of his safety, and of the arrest of his assailants, there only remained to her as a source of discomfort the sorrow to find that Will Howard was mixed up with so dastardly an attempt. Another matter that troubled her somewhat was the knowledge of Fred's new expedition when, as she felt very certain, he could be in no condition for such an enterprise. It might be dangerous.

But as Fred soon returned to Beach City with no reminder of his dangerous adventure but a rapidly healing cut on his head, his young lady friend did not long have this last source of annoyance.

"I do not understand you lately, Rose," said her father to her one day, as she came suddenly into his parlor, her face radiant, her eyes dancing with a joyous light. "Here is your lover in prison, and you as gay as a butterfly. You should, by right, be a perfect cloud of tears, instead of a flood of sunshine."

"He is not my lover any more, father," rejoined Rose, seating herself beside him, and clasping his hand in both hers.

"I thought so," he replied. "But have you and Will quarreled?"

"Not exactly quarreled," she answered, lowering her head. "We only drifted apart; I found him out to be mean, selfish—"

"And guilty of crime," he added. "I am quite satisfied with your action, Rose. I found him out before you did, and told him of my loss of fortune, being quite sure that his ardent love would not stand that test."

"No, indeed! As he was kind enough to inform me, the Howards do not wed beggars." But is it really true, father? Are we really penniless?"

"Yes, Rose. It is unavoidable. But, do not let it depress you, my dear child. We will survive the loss of fortune."

He placed his free arm around her, and drew her affectionately to him.

"Depress me, indeed!" she cried. "I have you yet. And I have my health and spirits."

"But you have lost fortune and lover."

"Let him go. There are better left," exclaimed Rose, with a laugh that held as much indignation as joy.

"You don't mean to say that you have another lover, Rose? Well, I declare! Who is it, child? I hope he is wealthy."

A thought had flashed through Mr. Darlington's English-trained mind that he might recover from his losses yet, through a fortunate match of his daughter. But he would not dare breathe the thought of any mercenary action in her presence.

Rose's head lowered still more, until he was unable to see her blushing face.

"He is not wealthy, father," she replied, in a low tone. "But he is good, and honest, and I know he loves me dearly. And is not that better than money?"

"I should not like to say yes to that, Rose," was

the grave reply. "You are certainly not fitted to endure poverty."

"I could endure everything for love," she answered. "Don't fear but that I could bear love in a cottage. I have no foolish pride, nor expensive habits, to get rid of. And I have no fear but that he would make me a living."

"You do not know what you are talking about, my child," replied her father, with a shake of the head. "Life is all sunlight to you young lovers. But the clouds are sure to come. Trouble cannot be frightened off by love. You have not yet begun to know what real life is, Rose."

"I must learn, I suppose, as many a poor soul has before me," she returned, with pouting lips. "The most of people are poor, I know. And they do not seem to me unhappy. I hope you will not find fault with me, papa, for I do dearly love him."

She clasped her two arms around him, and looked with gentle appeal into his face.

"Who is it?" he asked, with a sudden dread. "I hope your romantic fancy has led you to no choice unworthy of you, my daughter. I hope poverty is his only fault—that he is not ignorant and low-minded."

"No, indeed!" she exclaimed, springing to her feet, her eyes blazing with a mingled sentiment of pride and indignation. "He is one of nature's gentlemen; and I owe him my life; and—he is here!"

She threw open the door and ran out. In an instant she returned, her hand clasped in that of Fred Halyard, who bore his usual erect attitude and look of self-trust, though his eyes were downcast, and he held back somewhat from her impetuous movement.

"He is here, papa! It is Fred Halyard, to whom I owe my life."

This was spoken with an enforced enthusiasm. Rose was very uncertain of her father's reception of this announcement. Her eyes, too, dropped, and the pair stood before Mr. Darlington like criminals awaiting sentence.

"I would never have spoken to Rose, in this way," remarked Fred, earnestly, but without lifting his eyes, "but that she told me she was poor like myself. Of course, I know that I can never be her equal in any other way."

A slight pressure from the hand that held his answered this.

If they had looked into Mr. Darlington's face their suspense might have been sooner ended. Its first show of deep surprise was followed by a flush in which hope and joy were clearly mingled. To their utter astonishment he rose from his chair, and clasped them both in his arms.

"She is yours, Fred, and I am glad enough it is you. You don't know what trouble you have saved me, Rose. And as for that lost fortune, it has not floated away so far but that it may return."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE WINDING UP.

OUR story is told. There remain but the loose threads of our work to gather up. It will not be very difficult for the reader to guess the cause of Mr. Darlington's approbation of Fred Halyard's suit, although his enthusiastic manner had very agreeably astonished that young man himself.

Certainly, Mr. Darlington's design of handing over his property to its true heir, was rendered a more pleasant ceremony by the discovery of the relations between Fred and his daughter.

"I am certainly obliged to you, Rose, for turning your fancy in that direction," he said, with a pleased smile. "Not that I should ever accuse you of mercenary intentions, particularly, as you did not know what a lucky hit you were making. But, chance has decidedly turned in our favor, this time."

"Oh, now!" cried Rose, poutingly. "I wish you would not talk that way, father. And I don't know—if Fred is going to be so rich—I hardly think I ought to hold him to his promise. Circumstances have changed so."

"Now, hold your tongue, puss," exclaimed her father. "You know it is not a Will Howard in this case. I don't believe the boy would let you go, for twice the money."

"He is not such a boy, papa, he is as old as I am—" And you are not an antique yet. I have seen more venerable specimens than the pair of you. However, when you are two or three years older—"

"Two or three years older! But you are a regular tease, and I won't say another word about it, now, for I know you like to vex one."

But her eyes sparkled as she left the room, as if she felt quite sure of having her own way, when she had fully made up her mind to any fixed way.

Meanwhile, the course of justice moved on, slowly but surely.

The prosecution against Amos Yarnall and Wilbur Howard resulted in a verdict of three months' imprisonment against Amos Yarnall, to whom Fred imputed his wound, while he exonerated Will by testifying that they had been engaged in a fair hand to hand wrestle, and that he did not believe Will meant him any personal harm.

Rose thanked him warmly for this generosity. She could not bear the thought of Will being imprisoned through any one connected with herself, much as she despised his meanness.

In the trial of the smugglers, only the members of the firm of Tompkins, Son & Co., the captain and mate of the smuggler, and the fisherman, Bates, were prosecuted with any earnestness. It was easily seen that the sailors, and the driver of the wagon, were not parties to the illegal venture. And as for Jim Bundy, he was cleared of any criminal complicity by the testimony of the mate, who declared that Jim was ignorant of the character of the goods intrusted to his care.

Though there was no doubt entertained that he knew he was connected with some underhand enterprise, the prosecution was not pushed against

him, there being no positive evidence to show that he was an intelligent abettor of crime. And, besides this, Mr. Darlington had exerted a powerful secret influence in his behalf.

Against the direct participants in the crime the Government pushed a vigorous prosecution, being determined to break up the nest of smugglers who had so long evaded all efforts at discovery. Mr. Proctor gained great praise for his energetic efforts to discover their haunts, but the enthusiastic sympathy of the court went out toward Fred Halyard, whose modest account of his part in the affair of the capture seemed as interesting as a romance.

We will not dwell further on this trial, which, though of importance to the country, is a matter of secondary interest to us. It will suffice to say that the accused were all convicted, and punished to the extent of the law.

Meanwhile Amos Yarnall, even from his prison cell, had set in train the first steps of his proceedings against Mr. Darlington. His son was at large, and was sufficiently a chip of the old block to prosecute these proceedings with energy.

Fortunately Mr. Darlington held a trump hand against them stronger than they dreamed of. Fred Halyard was certainly surprised, and old Tom was overwhelmed, on learning that the parentage of the ocean waif was well known, and that he was the true heir to the very large property held by Mr. Darlington.

This matter, in fact, was virtually proved ere any legal steps were taken to establish it. The record of the period of sailing of the Monsoon, with the names of her crew and passengers, was still in existence. And between Jack Bunce, and Jake Miller, the mate, it was fully settled that the Edward Thompson whose name figured in the list of the Monsoon's crew, was the same person with Jim Bundy of the Red Lion at Crockettstown.

But the most important evidence was that of Bundy or Thompson himself. His memory had returned sufficiently for him to distinctly identify the child who had come ashore with him as the son of George Bruce, the only passenger of the Monsoon.

And old Tom Halyard was sufficient evidence for the identification of his adopted son, Fred, with this child.

The affair had reached this stage ere Fred himself was made aware of it; and it had passed to the point of a legal decision in favor of Fred as the true heir of the property in dispute ere Amos Yarnall was made acquainted with the result.

He was released from prison only to find that the prosecution of his suit had simply proved effective in aiding the more secret proceedings of his enemies, and to learn that Fred Halyard, or to give him his real name, Harvey Bruce, was established as the true heir to the estate.

It was with no pleasant sense of defeat that Amos Yarnall and his precious son slunk out of sight and out of mind, utterly left out in the cold by the new turn which had come in the tide of affairs.

But, there are always two parties to the question of a legal decision, and Fred Halyard, as one of the parties in this case, was not at all inclined to abide by the decision of the court. He was simply determined not to accept the estate of Mr. Darlington, a decision in which old Tom sustained him.

The old man, in fact, felt that the acceptance of such wealth would not only ruin the boy, but would cut him off from himself. He could not bear the thought of losing his adopted son through his inheritance of any such personal wealth.

"You're right, Fred," he averred. "You've your head and your arms. And there's not a soul on the coast as knows the use of them better nor yourself. And, hang me, if I'd have a fortune as I'd never set a sail to win. Stick to honest work, my boy. You'll find it to pay better than all the cash-books this side of Jericho."

"But suppose I marry Rose Darlington, and come into it that way?" queried Fred, with a sly look at the old sailor.

"I s'pose you will whether I say ay or nay," was the grumbling response. "But I hope you won't be silly boy enough to hurry it up afore you get to years of common-sense. Not to say that you're a fool, or any such harsh words as that, Fred, for I think you're a regular steel-trap for sharpness. But I never see'd a boy yet as growed into common-sense afore twenty-one, at the very least. And there's precious few of them that get into it at that age."

Although Fred hardly agreed with the cynical old man in this opinion, he had judgment enough to concede that experience might possibly be better than assurance, and to yield his opinion on this point.

It is no easy matter for two young lovers, with no obstacle in their way but the invisible one (to them) of age, to wait for years on the cool judgment of their elders. But fortunately Rose and Fred had both the sense to feel that old wit might, after all, be better than young wit, and to yield the mooted point.

Fred took advantage of the years of probation to obtain some more extended schooling than was to be had at Beach City, and with his application, and quickness of perception, he left college with a very fair scholarship, and with a polish of manner that had been scarcely obtainable in his life between sand and water at Beach City.

But several years have passed since then, and the long-deferred wedding is now an event of a year or two in the past. But if there is a happier couple to be anywhere found in their honeymoon than Fred and Rose, we should like to see them, that's all. And if there's a happier old sailor than Tom Halyard, in his cabin-like residence adjoining Fred's sea-side cottage, we should like amazingly to have some one point him out to us.

THE END.

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- 2 **Yellowstone Jack.** By Jos. E. Badger, Jr.
- 3 **Kansas King; or, THE RED RIGHT HAND.** By Buffalo Bill (Hon. Wm. F. Cody).
- 4 **The Wild-Horse Hunters.** By Captain Mayne Reid and Captain Frederick Whittaker.
- 5 **Vagabond Joe, THE YOUNG WANDERING JEW; or, PLOTTING FOR A LEGACY.** By Oil Coomes.
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